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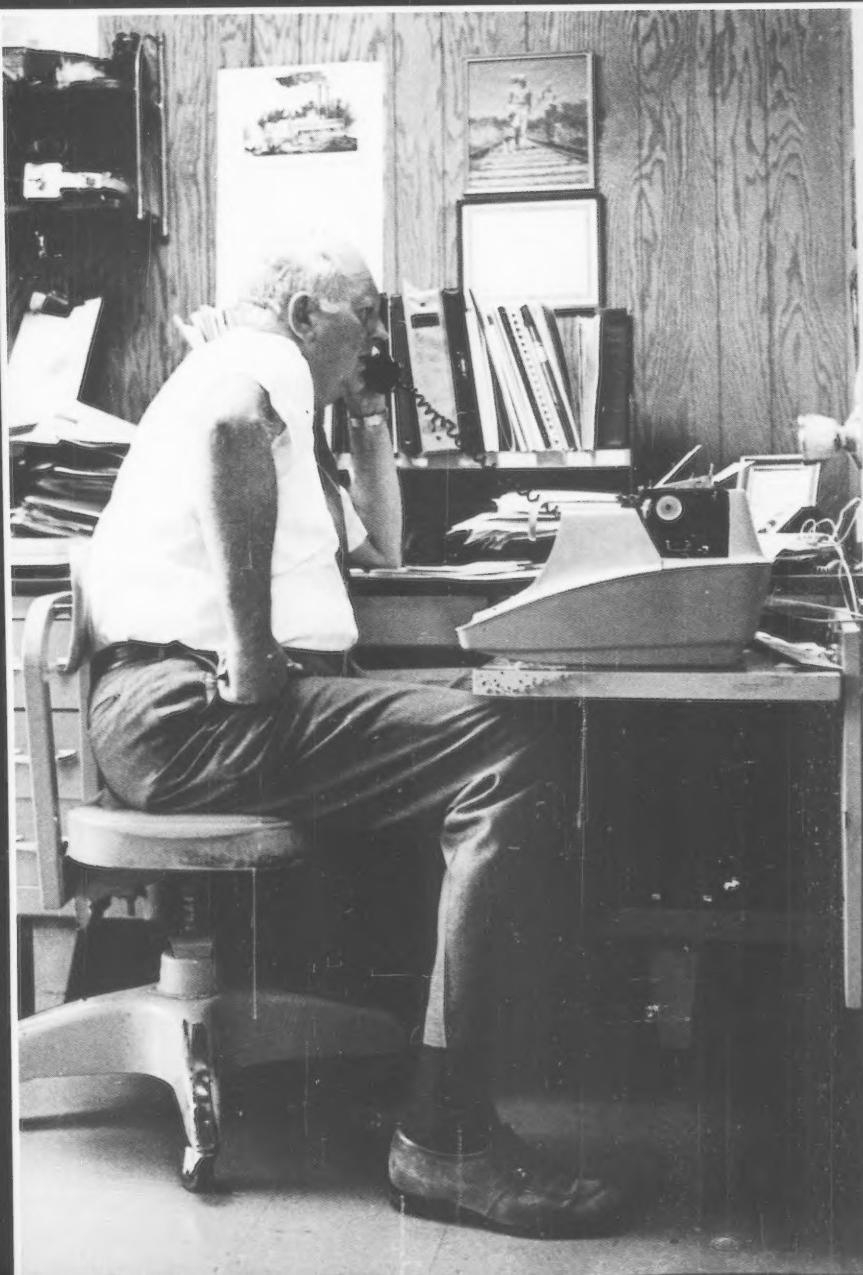
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER COLUMBIA 1987 • \$3

JOURNALISM REVIEW

How Free
Is the
U.S. Press?

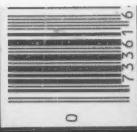
HANGING ON

A small-
town
paper
struggles
to cover-
and
survive—
the farm
crisis



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• To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define — or redefine — standards of honest, responsible service . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent ♦

Excerpt from the Review's founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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CHRONICLE

A voice South Africa can't silence

The Namibian, a new weekly published in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia — a country that continues to be occupied by South Africa in defiance of a 1966 United Nations ruling — infuriated authorities in late 1985 by reporting claims that security forces had tied the bodies of alleged terrorists to the outside of armored vehicles in the country's northern militarized zone, presumably to intimidate the locals. The authorities vehemently denied the report and demanded proof, and the small paper kept the controversy alive for over a year. Then, one day, someone dropped off a photograph of the publicly displayed bodies lashed to the front and side of a Caspir, the armored vehicle favored by South African security forces.

The quality of the photo was hardly professional, but *The Namibian* ran it on page one last January. Security officials scrambled to downplay the evidence, saying that the only reason the bodies had been transported that

way was because there was no room inside, and that it had happened only once. South Africa's Directorate of Publications then banned that issue of the paper from further distribution, only to be forced to withdraw the ban shortly afterwards. The paper's lawyers pointed out that *The Namibian* was a member of South Africa's National Press Union and therefore could not be summarily banned.

The Namibian has scored other legal points against the Transitional Government of National Unity installed by Pretoria, which essentially rules Namibia as a South African province. Under South Africa's Internal Security Act, the government can require a newspaper to put up a substantial deposit before it can publish. *The Namibian* challenged that requirement in court, and the government was forced to refund 20,000 rands (about \$10,000). The landmark case could make it more difficult to require such deposits

in the future — a boon for small publications.

The paper is committed to the independence of Namibia. In issue after issue, it challenges the South African occupation and the authority of the Transitional Government, which is installed in the Tintenpalast, a turn-of-the-century building just blocks from *The Namibian*'s offices. The paper's first editorial, in August 1985, laid out its position clearly: "We know this commitment will not earn ourselves popularity in certain quarters, but we can see no alternative to the holding of free and fair elections." *The Namibian* was founded by Gwen Lister, thirty-three, who had been political editor and columnist at another local weekly, *The Windhoek Observer*. But in 1984 the *Observer*'s entire editorial and business staff quit in protest when, after the paper had been repeatedly banned by the authorities, its publisher and editor suspended Lister's column (CJR, November/December 1984). The publisher was quoted at the time as saying that Gwen Lister would "never write another line of politics in her life."

Today *The Namibian* is virtually the only dissident media voice in a country of 1.2 million people, and it has rarely missed an opportunity to get under the government's skin. Several other papers are mostly conservative, and radio and television, which regularly try to discredit Lister and her paper, are controlled by the government. In the two years since *The Namibian* was started, Lister and her staff have received death threats and their tires have been slashed and car windows smashed. Someone once tried to burn down the paper's offices, and Lister has had bomb-proof glass installed in the windows.

The 5,000-circulation paper is crammed with news — local and national stories, and news from South Africa — as well as "Bloom County" cartoon strips. There are sections on sports, entertainment, "Myths and Legends of Southern Africa," and basic health care — the importance of tetanus vaccinations, the symptoms of meningitis in infants, first aid for major wounds. Each week Lister's political column takes aim at the interim government, which consists of a National Assembly of sixty members, including an eight-member cabinet, none of whom are elected. Instead, five political parties have nominated their own members to these positions, which pay generous salaries and include such perks as free housing, interest-free loans, and chauffeurs.

An issue rarely goes by without the paper finding itself enmeshed in controversy. In late May, the local press gave front-page coverage to an alleged assault by Sam Nujoma, the leader of the South West African People's

Raising hell in Namibia: Gwen Lister, center, and the staff of *The Namibian*, which provides virtually the only dissident voice in a country dominated by South Africa



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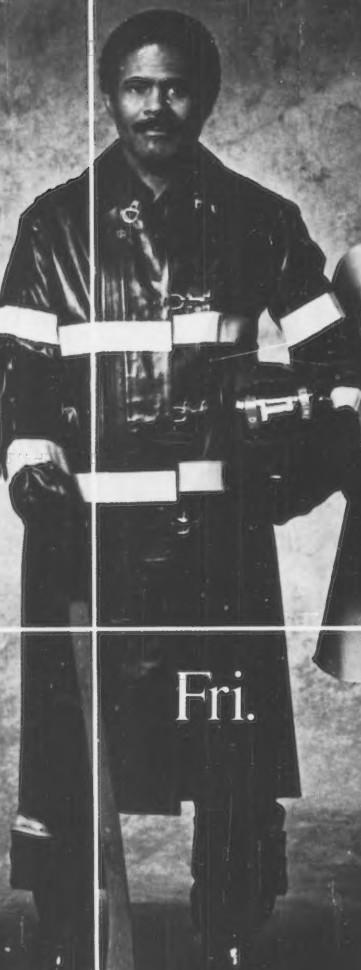
This has been a part of our continuing series on important, controversial and complex issues that challenge American competitiveness. We welcome your reactions and questions. Write: Frederick W. McCarthy, Drexel Burnham Lambert, 60 Broad Street, Room 1111, New York, New York 10004.

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Why it happened. What it means.

CHRONICLE

Organization (SWAPO), on a Namibian woman at a conference they were both attending in France. The woman, a well-known critic of SWAPO, which has been fighting a guerrilla war against South African occupation for twenty years, was reported to have confronted Nujoma with allegations that Namibian children are held against their will in SWAPO camps, a charge SWAPO denies. A reporter for *The Namibian* happened to be in London at the same time and interviewed SWAPO officials, who said the incident involving the woman never took place.

The Namibian survives on donations from overseas contributors, mostly European governments, plus income from advertising and subscriptions. It has set up a news service to send out stories about the country — no foreign correspondents are based there — but Lister says foreign editors have shown little interest. That is a big change from just a few years ago when the Reagan administration made independence for Namibia a major goal

of its constructive-engagement policy, and an assistant secretary of state, Chester Crocker, was scurrying around the globe consulting with almost anyone who would talk to him about a settlement. The escalating conflict in South Africa is one reason Namibia was crowded off the media map.

Lister has started a training program for black journalists, the only one in the country, and three of the paper's six editorial staff members are black. She hopes the program "will eventually provide enough journalists to run the press in an independent Namibia." In the meantime, *The Namibian* provides a picture for the outside world of life in an occupied country where a guerrilla war drags on with no end in sight.

Chris Shipanga, one of *The Namibian's* black reporters, is probably the only journalist to cover the dangerous militarized zone in the north, along the Angolan border, on a regular basis. There he faces constant police harassment, exacerbated by the fact that he

is black. "You feel intimidated by their presence," he says. "You're watched all the time, and you're followed all the time. You have second thoughts about going up there as regularly as you would like."

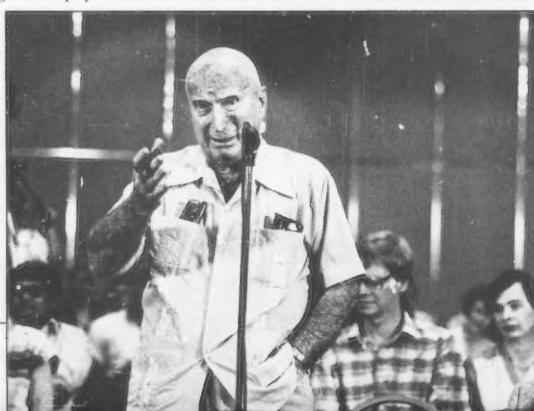
Shipanga has lost track of the number of times he has been arrested, detained, or had material confiscated. Late last year, on a trip to the militarized zone, he was arrested for alleged drug possession. Shipanga insisted that the drug had been planted on him and, when the case came to court, the charges were immediately dismissed because of discrepancies in the evidence presented by police witnesses. Despite the pressure, Shipanga says he hasn't considered giving up. "I think it is part of life here. One must at times risk your life if you're really serious about what you're doing."

Louis Freedberg

Louis Freedberg writes for Pacific News Service.



Slings and arrows: Some people just complain about their newspaper; in Austin, they take action. In June, publisher Roger Kintzel and editor Arnold Rosenfeld (above) listened to four hours of complaints from politically active subscribers, including (clockwise from the top) Susan Frost, Jim Shahin, Conrad Fath, and neighborhood organizer Stuart Heady, who sent a videotape of the meeting to the paper's owners, the Cox chain.



Austin's Statesman gets surrounded

A hotel meeting room in Austin, Texas, in June. The publisher and the editor of the monopoly newspaper, the *Austin American-Statesman*, are facing more than 100 mutinous readers.

Speaker after speaker praises the *Statesman's* news coverage of state issues and its liberal editorial stances on international, national, and state issues. Then they add the big BUT. As political consultant Peck Young puts it, "You people show a more consistent compassion the further away from your advertisers you go."

Attorney Conrad Fath, bent with arthritis, moves to the microphone, takes a cigar out of his mouth, and adds, "I've read your damn newspaper for fifty-six years. I didn't come here to have you two gentlemen combat and debate everybody that gets up here. We don't want to hear your excuses. We want you to hear what we have to say." Enthusiastic applause.

Publisher Roger Kintzel and editor Arnold Rosenfeld have called this meeting in response to a petition signed by 219 Austinites and sent to the Cox newspaper chain's owners in Atlanta, Georgia. The petition asks that the chain "remove the advertising department's obvious heavy influence from the editorial department's news judgment" and "give the current editor, Arnold Rosenfeld, who seems to have a sense of fairness and some sensitivity to the community, a real role

by Alan Pogue

"...AND I'M SURE I SPEAK FOR ALL OF US WHEN I SAY THE RAILROADS SHOULD BE REREGULATED."



Some people who claim to speak for everybody are really speaking for almost nobody.

For example, there's a group in Washington calling itself Consumers United for Rail Equity (C.U.R.E.) that claims to speak for rail shippers. It's a group that is supported principally by the coal and electric utility industries. And it's seeking revisions to the Staggers Rail Act of 1980 which—if they benefit anyone—would primarily benefit the coal and utility industries at the expense of most other rail customers.

Most shippers—87 percent of those surveyed recently—are happy with the improved service and rates brought about by deregulation. They don't want

to see this progress reversed. And they certainly don't want to change a law that has revitalized failing railroads and made it possible for all railroads to become so competitive with each other and with other modes of transportation that rates overall are dropping.

Even the rates paid by C.U.R.E.'s supporters for shipping coal have dropped for the past two years. Down 2 percent in 1985 and down 2.5 percent in 1986. They're now at their lowest level since 1981. In addition, the contracts made possible by the Staggers Act have assured many utilities of low rates in the future.

Nevertheless, C.U.R.E.'s members think they can use

federal and state governments to lower their rates still further.

Maybe. But if they win, most other rail shippers will lose—through higher rates, deteriorating service, and—as railroads decline—perhaps through loss of service altogether.

If you're a journalist interested in these issues, the Association of American Railroads will be happy to provide you with more information. Because we think that to tell the story properly, you need facts, not just assertions. To get the facts, write Media Information, Association of American Railroads, 50 F St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, Dept. 714. If you're on a deadline, call (202) 639-2555.



ASSOCIATION OF
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CHRONICLE

in leading the paper's editorial policy."

The vast majority of the people at the June 23 meeting are from the neighborhood wing, as opposed to the realtor/developer wing, of Austin city politics. The *Statesman* endorsed three pro-development candidates in spring city elections. All three were defeated by pro-neighborhood candidates, and the newspaper's critics are feeling their oats.

In their introductory remarks, Rosenfeld and Kintzel adamantly deny that news or editorials are influenced by business interests. "Arnold runs the editorial side totally," Kintzel says. "There is no advertising influence in editorial content."

Out of the audience jumps a skinny fellow, Ed Ramsey, a neighborhood political activist. "That's a bunch of bunk," he shouts, quivering with anger. "I don't know what it will take to convince you," Rosenfeld replies. "I can only tell you the way things actually run." He is disarming, but the subscribers are not disarmed.

Over the next four hours, the *Statesman* is roasted for allegedly failing to understand cost-of-service electric-rate computations, for blaming Austin's economic downturn on city land-use policies rather than on bad business judgment by bankers and developers, for failure to print certain letters to the editor, for accusing local environmentalists of having a lack of concern for the plight of the poor. One activist, Susan Frost, even complains that, while the newspaper endorsed her favorite candidate, it did so for the wrong reasons. By 11:30 P.M., the two executives plead fatigue, and are finally released.

So it goes in Texas's most liberal city, where bashing the *Statesman* is almost as

popular as country music. Over the years, the paper has been dubbed the *Austin Un-American*, the *Austin Snakesman*, the *Austin Awful*, the *Austin Murky Statement*, and, the current favorite, the *Austin American Real-Estatesman*. Many Americans grumble about their local newspaper. What is unique to Austin is the extent to which the critics have intervened to change things.

The last rebellion was over editor Ray Mariotti, who wrote cynical, derisive columns about Austin politics. He called the city council, which at the time had a pro-neighborhood majority, "the bat cave," because everybody there was "hanging upside down." Bumper stickers proclaimed, "Free the Press, Fire Mariotti." Mariotti exited three years ago. He was replaced by Rosenfeld, who has made many improvements in the paper, and who has been a less controversial and more accessible editor.

After the June meeting, Rosenfeld wrote a fifty-six-inch warts-and-all report. "Tough as [the session] was," he concluded, "perhaps more understanding and interaction will come of it. Thanks for everyone's time." Publisher Kintzel said in an interview, "It was good for us to hear how those people felt. It cleared the air."

Both say that the session has not prompted any changes in policy. Beyond the flatly denied charge that advertising influences editorial policy, the criticisms of the newspaper were scattershot and sometimes contradictory. Rosenfeld, who has held numerous "Meet the Editor" sessions over the past three years, says, "In every meeting I've had different complaints. This was a very political meeting with people who are engaged in

politics. There are other constituencies that care very deeply about other issues."

Kintzel and Rosenfeld no doubt would like to put this particular session, which *Texas Monthly* magazine described as an "editor's evening in hell," behind them. But a two-hour version was scheduled to air repeatedly on Austin public-access television, which attracts a surprising number of viewers. The tape encourages people to send further comments to James Cox Kennedy, president of Cox Enterprises, Inc. Copies of the videotape have been sent to Kennedy and other brass in Atlanta.

The *Statesman*, in fact, rarely has the last word in Austin. It is surrounded by a small army of suburban weeklies, political newsletters, and other alternative voices. They include, for example, *The Daryl Herald*, an iconoclastic left-wing newsletter edited by Daryl Slusher and Daryl Janes (as well as a couple of non-Daryls), and *The Austin Agenda*, edited by the *Statesman*'s former city hall reporter, Tony Tucci, which closely follows land-use regulations and other local administrative issues. In addition, many of Austin's 200-plus neighborhood groups and coalitions have their own newsletters.

Some of these publications also have been crowing about the victory of their candidates in last spring's elections. "In a sense," wrote Jim Shahin in *The Austin Chronicle*, "the American-Statesman has become the second paper in a one-paper town."

Kaye Northcott

Kaye Northcott is a former editor of *The Texas Observer* and president of the *Texas Institute of Letters*.

Who's teaching whom at Tulsa Junior College?

David Arnett was more interested in business than journalism when, at age thirty-two, he decided to go back to school. A self-described entrepreneur and conservative Republican, he had suffered a setback when his "Flowers on Call," a twenty-four-hour ordering service, had failed to bloom during the oil bust in Tulsa. After a stint as a Jeep salesman, he began to pursue a major in business administration last year at Tulsa Junior College.

Along the way Arnett took a course in newswriting. He liked journalism so much that he volunteered to edit *Horizon*, the paper put out by the college's journalism students. He was appointed to the job even though he

Rebel with a cause: The rules said no editorials: David Arnett broke them.

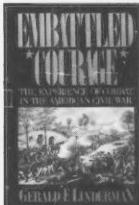


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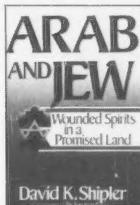
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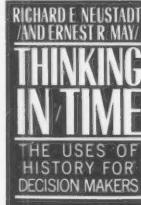
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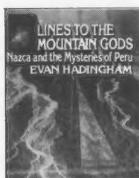
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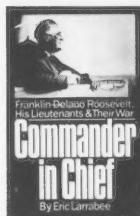
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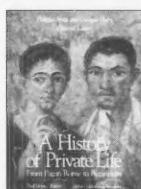
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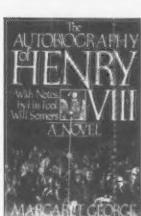
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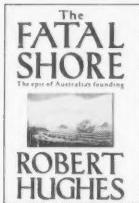
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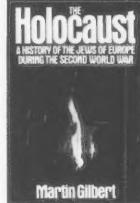
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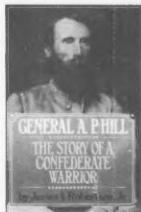
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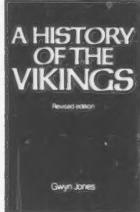
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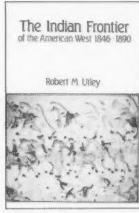
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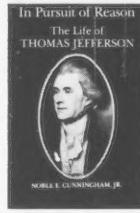
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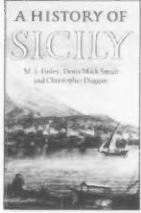
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CHRONICLE

had already begun to question restrictions on the newspaper — why, for example, were only 200 copies printed on a campus with a student body of 16,000?

He found other restrictions even more troubling. *Horizon* was not allowed to print editorials or letters to the editor, and it was distributed only to the journalism students. The administration, it was clear, did not want a real campus newspaper underfoot, and when Arnett broke the rules, such as the one forbidding editorials, he was fired. But Tulsa Junior College officials may have underes-

timated their opponent.

Arnett says his determination to put some backbone into *Horizon* was inspired by his discovery that the paper had not always been so tame. In the mid-1970s, it had functioned as a real newspaper, distributed to all 4,000 students at the school at that time. What sparked the administration to take action against the paper, says former journalism adviser James Tidwell, was a 1976 editorial supporting the creation of a prison work-release center near the downtown campus, now the largest of the junior college's three cam-

puses. The administration opposed the downtown location and, although the editorial was a mild one, Tidwell says school officials threatened not to renew his contract after it appeared. The threat was not carried out, but administrators subsequently decreed that *Horizon* was a "laboratory exercise," not a newspaper, and put in place the restrictions on its content. "It's just absurd," says Tidwell, who left the school in 1978 and is now teaching at Eastern Illinois University. "And I'm glad to see it's coming to a head again. It really took David to do it." *continued*

Paycheck puzzle: what journalists earn

Allen Neuharth, Gannett's chairman and temporary traveling columnist for *USA Today*, made \$1.5 million last year, according to *Media Industry Newsletter*. Columnists like Rowland Evans, Robert Novak, and George Will can each gross close to \$1 million in a good year, with television, lectures, and other extra income, according to estimates in *The Washington Post*. Gordon Barnes, weatherman for Washington, D.C.'s WUSA-TV, makes an estimated \$175,000, according to *The Washingtonian* magazine. What about the rest of us? Here is CJR's unscientific survey of journalism salaries across America.

NAME	TITLE	EMPLOYER	LOCATION	EXPERIENCE	SALARY
Don Armstrong	copy editor	<i>The Village Voice</i>	New York, N.Y.	5 years	\$18,000
Kenny Bē	editorial cartoonist	<i>Westword</i>	Denver, Col.	5	\$10,400
Denny Brand	investigative reporter	WAFB-TV	Baton Rouge, La.	11	\$29,100
David Brezoviec	senior editor	<i>Coal Age</i>	New York, N.Y.	16	\$40,000
Doris Dietrich	society editor	<i>Sanford Herald</i>	Sanford, Fla.	23	\$13,000
David Gram	newsman	Associated Press	Montpelier, Vt.	7	\$34,000
Jared Hamilton	news director	KNFT radio	Bayard, N. Mex.	3	\$10,200
Peter Howell	reporter	<i>Bucks County Courier Times</i>	Levittown, Pa.	4	\$22,111
Meera Klein	reporter	<i>The Sacramento Observer</i>	Sacramento, Calif.	½	\$12,000
John Kolb	sports editor	<i>Albert Lea Tribune</i>	Albert Lea, Minn.	20	\$14,800
Lori Lamb	reporter	<i>The Anniston Star</i>	Anniston, Ala.	6	\$17,000
Sheryl Larson	managing editor	<i>In These Times</i>	Chicago, Ill.	10	\$27,520
Dan Lazare	editorial writer/columnist	<i>The Record</i>	Hackensack, N.J.	13	\$44,000
Maisie McAdoo	reporter	Reuters North America	New York, N.Y.	5	\$35,000
Bill McCulloch	editor	<i>Gloucester Daily Times</i>	Gloucester, Mass.	22	\$32,760
Beth Nissen	correspondent	ABC News	New York, N.Y.	11	\$70,000
Dick Petrik	news director	KOEL radio	Oelwein, Iowa	36	\$25,000
Joe Raymond	staff photographer	<i>South Bend Tribune</i>	South Bend, Ind.	14	\$27,260
Richard Sacks	fact checker	<i>The New Yorker</i>	New York, N.Y.	15	\$32,760
Dale Stevens	film critic	<i>The Cincinnati Post</i>	Cincinnati, Ohio	41	\$38,324
Marion Stewart	reporter	<i>The Sheboygan Press</i>	Sheboygan, Wis.	7	\$29,328
Frank Wetzel	ombudsman	<i>The Seattle Times</i>	Seattle, Wash.	35	\$64,000
Robert Windrem	producer	NBC Nightly News	New York, N.Y.	20	\$87,500
Lyle York	section editor	<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	San Francisco, Calif.	12	\$38,161
Dale Zacher	reporter	KFJM radio	Grand Forks, N. Dak.	3	\$15,600

CJR/Donna Moody

Statistics compiled by Michael Patrick and David Weller

Eleanor Randolph

A black and white close-up portrait of a young woman with dark hair and bangs, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, collared shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

The News Business: Her new weekly syndicated column on the triumphs and foibles of the media.

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CHRONICLE

Dean VanTrease, the school's executive vice-president, contends that *Horizon* was never meant to be anything but a way to let journalism students see their work in print: "I don't think we ever had a student newspaper." Circulation was cut way down in 1985 because of state budget reductions, he says, adding that "a lot [of the papers] were left on the racks." Alfred M. Philips, president of the junior college, has been reluctant to talk about *Horizon*, but college officials have argued that students can get information about the school through the school's own bulletins and pamphlets. The current journalism adviser, M. Rogers McSpadden, insists that *Horizon* can cover news without limitations, but concedes that the ban on editorials is unfortunate. "I have always advised the administration that we are in violation of the First Amendment," he says.

Last November, when Arnett argued for the right to print more papers, the school cut *Horizon*'s circulation down to 100. After that, Arnett printed an editorial on freedom of the campus press. He also delivered a twenty-page proposal for a student paper, first to the administration, and later to the school's board of regents, Tulsa officials, and local media. He was fired in February, and, four weeks later, so was his replacement, Dana Mitchell, who supported his goals.

With the board of regents still cool to his proposals, Arnett began to line up supporters, including the American Civil Liberties Union; the Eastern Oklahoma chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi; the student association; and *Faculty Forum*, a faculty newsletter. Local TV stations and *The Tulsa Tribune* closely followed the fight. Arnett told the board he would not hesitate to sue if necessary.

But his next move was the boldest — Arnett started his own newspaper, the *Independent Student News*, which has been loaded with editorials and letters about the *Horizon* controversy. Arnett sees the newspaper as temporary, and so does Tulsa investor Richard L. "Dex" Jones III, who agreed to pay half the costs for each edition, \$2,000 so far. "It's one of the worst business investments I've ever made," Jones says with a laugh. Like Arnett, he would like to see the *Independent Student News* replaced by a school-sponsored paper with the freedom to cover the campus.

The board refused to discuss the case for some time, citing Arnett's threat of a lawsuit. Finally, in May, the board's attorney declared that the school was not in violation of the First Amendment. A few weeks later, however, the board announced that its policy committee would consider the idea of cre-

ating a student newspaper. The Oklahoma legislature entered the fray later in June with a resolution, nonbinding but difficult to ignore, that says the lawmakers "will not tolerate abridgement" of the free-press rights of Oklahoma students. Then, in July, the board said it would poll students to see how much they want a paper. A final decision is expected before the end of the year.

Arnett will be watching closely. He has been putting some of his own money into the *Independent Student News* and, as the dust begins to settle in Tulsa, he finds himself "broke" but "happy." He's thinking about law school, but might stay in journalism "if I have some talent."

Rebecca L. Martin

Rebecca L. Martin covers higher education for *The Tulsa Tribune*.

Why poets picketed the L.A. Times

It is difficult

To get the news from poems
Yet men die miserably every day
For lack
Of what is found there.

William Carlos Williams

The *Los Angeles Times* Sunday book review section took itself out of the business of regularly reviewing poetry this spring. Instead, each week the section now prints one brief poem selected from a recently published work, with a few words about the author and the new collection. Reviews do appear, but rarely. Jack Miles, the section's editor, wrote in April that he had several reasons for the decision, most of them having to do with the difficulty of explaining contemporary poetry to an audience that is not interested. It makes no sense to Miles to "publish comparative discussions of whole volumes of poetry for readers who rarely read even a single poem." And the state of modern poetry is so fragmented that "to an editor, it can be almost paralyzing." Miles, who has a doctorate in Near Eastern languages from Harvard University, says, "I'm trying to keep the common man in mind."

Many Los Angeles poets were furious. About thirty-five poets and their friends picketed the *Times* building (one placard read "L.A. Times Bad to Verse") and Miles received about 200 letters, most of them critical. Demonstration organizer Harry Northup, a poet who depicts local urban life in his work, believes the *Times* is turning its back on the art at the same moment that Los

Angeles, where there are a dozen poetry readings on any weekend, is experiencing a poetry boom. The protesters said there is no way to measure how many people have a passion for poetry. Jack Grapes, a local poet who conducts poetry workshops for Los Angeles schoolchildren, called the decision an insult to the intelligence of *Times* readers.

Other poets, some of national stature, agreed with the protesters. "It was a bad decision," said Ann Stanford, a well-known California poet and 1984 chairman of the Pulitzer Prize poetry jury. "I think it's a retreat from responsibility, from the mother of the arts. People do read poetry." (Ms. Stanford died in July.)

And one of the reasons they read poetry, says Katha Pollitt, winner of the 1983 National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry, is because they read poetry reviews first. "If books aren't reviewed," says Pollitt, a former literary editor of *The Nation*, "they cease to be part of active culture."

Miles never saw his decision as anti-poetry. He says he would be happy to publish reviews if he could add nine or ten pages to his section. "People have been trying to persuade me of things I already believe. I'm already in favor of publishing discussions of poetry, for all their difficulty, as well as poems. But, given that such discussions are difficult and they're being published for people who aren't prepared to read them, something has to go. I would rather see them go than the poems."

Editors at other newspapers say reader preference doesn't affect their decisions on what to review. At *The New York Times*'s

Line of attack: Poet Lee Roffi protesting a new poetry policy last spring



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Dvořák, Symphony No. 9 (New World) Chicago Symphony/Solti. London DIGITAL 115168

Rimsky-Korsakow, Scheherazade Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Previn. Philips DIGITAL 115415

Ravel, Daphnis et Chloé (Complete) Montreal Symphony/Dutoit. London DIGITAL 115520

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CHRONICLE

Sunday book review section, editor Mitchel Levitas calls the *Los Angeles Times's* decision regrettable. And Dianne Donovan, book review editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, says, "We don't in any way correlate the books we review to the popularity they receive, or else we'd be reviewing Gary Larson's [Far Side] cartoon books over and over again."

But Jonathan Yardley, book critic and columnist for *The Washington Post*, while not endorsing Miles's action, says he can see reasons for it. In a column in May, he called the decision to stop reviewing poetry "something that newspaper book review editors everywhere have for years yearned, in their innermost hearts, to do." Poetry, Yardley wrote, has moved far away from the center stage of American life, and the names and

works of the leading poets of the day, A. R. Ammons, John Ashbery, Gary Snyder, Amy Clampitt, James Merrill, Adrienne Rich, and others, are almost entirely unknown in the general culture.

"I don't think we owe a thing to poets or poetry," Yardley says, adding that poetry has to compete with everything else that warrants a newspaper's attention. In fact, just running a poem, as the *Los Angeles Times* is doing, he says, may be an even better way to get people hooked than running reviews. Meanwhile, he adds, the *Post* has "absolutely" no intention of stopping its own poetry reviews.

Sarah Arsone

Sarah Arsone is a Los Angeles writer who specializes in culture and the arts.

Trahant won an award from the National Press Foundation in 1985 and the *Times* won the Arizona Press Club's Distinguished Service Award posthumously this spring for its efforts to operate as a free press. Trahant said at the time: "We all stuck to our principles and convictions and never once compromised. And, in the end, that probably was our doom."

In addition to full-blown coverage of the feud-like contest between MacDonald and then-chairman Peterson Zah, the paper had staged the first televised debate between candidates for the chairmanship. Many Navajos determined to preserve traditional ways had supported Zah, while others who believe the tribe must embrace technology and Anglo values to survive backed MacDonald. "Zah is velvet shirts and turquoise," says one Navajo. "MacDonald is Brooks Brothers suits." The two sides traded charges in full-page ads that filled the paper in the weeks before the election last fall, and MacDonald won by less than one-half of one percent of the 61,000 votes cast.

The paper's endorsement of Zah and its subsequent challenges to MacDonald's assessment of tribal finances may have helped lead to its demise. In MacDonald's eyes, "some of the editorials probably bordered on heresy," says Tim Giago, president of the Native American Press Association. "I knew [Trahant] was digging himself a grave."

Trahant, twenty-nine, who had edited other Indian publications before taking over at the *Times* in 1983, says that from the beginning he wanted the paper to be more than

Navajoland: the death of a daily

Tribal police drove up last February 19 to the offices of *Navajo Times Today*, the country's first and only daily Indian newspaper, in Window Rock, Arizona. Inside, the *Times*'s employees had just been told the paper would cease publication that day, and the police escorted the stunned staff out.

The reason given for the abrupt closing by Peter MacDonald, the new chairman of the Navajo tribe, was money. The *Times* was \$700,000 in debt and owed the federal government an estimated \$185,000 in back taxes. "When you have an operation that was losing two thousand dollars a day and there

is no end to it," says MacDonald, "you must suspend the operation to find out why."

But the paper's supporters believe MacDonald had other reasons. The closing came just six weeks after he had taken over as chairman of the country's largest Indian tribe, and after a bitterly fought election campaign in which the *Times* had endorsed MacDonald's opponent. Former editor and publisher Mark N. Trahant, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe, who turned the *Times* into a daily in 1984, thinks the paper's political independence was the main reason for its demise.



Final edition:
Editor Mark Trahant (center with glasses) and a dejected staff on the day after the country's only Indian daily was shut down last February by the new chief of the Navajos. Navajo Times Today was losing money, but some think editorial independence is what killed it.

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a tribal mouthpiece, as many Indian newspapers are — that he thought it had a duty to educate as well as to inform its readers. One section he started, a news summary that he describes as a cross between *The New York Times's Week in Review* and *My Weekly Reader*, was written at an elementary-school level and became a favorite primer for many Navajos who spoke little English. Although the typical *Navajo Times* reader was probably middle-class, Trahant also tried to reach the sheepherders and cattle ranchers scattered across the reservation's sweeping desert plains and settled under its towering red sandstone monoliths. Clans in those places would gather to listen as a son or daughter read the paper aloud.

The paper ran national and international stories related to Indian life: pieces on Sergeant Clayton Lonetree, the Navajo and Winnebago marine arrested in the Moscow espionage scandal, and on how an economic crisis in Australia could affect the Navajo wool-rug industry. Trahant used his \$1,000 award from the National Press Foundation to go to Maine and write a four-part series on the Passamaquoddy Indians, who used \$85 million that they received in a land settlement to invest in several industries and radio stations, making them one of the principal employers in southern Maine. The *Times* was

also a training ground for young Navajo journalists — three of its reporters had been to journalism school — and Trahant says the staff served as role models for the tribe.

While the *Times*, which first appeared as a monthly in 1959, had never made money, the business staff believed its finances were improving. Circulation had increased from 5,426 to 7,925 in the previous year, advertising was up, and the staff expected the paper to break even by 1990. Trahant, now a correspondent for *The Arizona Republic*, says he believes the Navajos needed a daily newspaper, even if it didn't make money: "The Navajo nation is a democracy of two hundred thousand people, and I cannot see a democracy of that size without a daily dis-

course." MacDonald says he, too, believes the Navajos need a newspaper, and this spring the tribe's Washington, D.C., public relations firm and a tribe official assembled a panel of eight newspaper publishers and journalism professors from around the country to suggest changes that would make a new paper profitable. The panel criticized as extravagant the use of an airplane to deliver papers and the use of a wire service, saying the *Times* had "moved away from its primary role as communicator of news of the Navajo Nation for the Navajo people." (Trahant defends hiring

a plane, which cost \$119,000 a year, to reach outlying areas promptly; the reservation is spread out over three states and circulation routes can be 400 miles long.)

A decision was made to publish an interim weekly paper through September, with a much smaller staff. In May, the staff produced its first sixteen-page tabloid, with \$67,000 in seed money from the tribe. While the daily *Times* had an editorial staff of fifteen, the new paper relies on a few stringers, none of them Indians, to write most of the copy. Other stories seem to be little more than press releases. A sampling of headlines: NEED MONEY — TRY MILKING SHEEP; FUN RUN SET JUNE 20; NEW TRADITIONS IN NAVAJO WEAVING. There is no editorial page.

Willis Brown, former publisher of *The Rapid City Journal* in South Dakota, who briefly served as publisher of the interim paper, concedes that it is "not very professional. I'm not very happy about that." He also says many advertisers seem to be waiting to see how well it is accepted. "I think that was one of the mistakes of closing the paper," Brown says. "It's hard to get people back after something has died."

Mary H. Westheimer

Mary H. Westheimer is a free-lance writer in Phoenix.

What's in a name?

Because people may sometimes find our various names confusing, here's an explanation to clear things up.

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CAPITAL LETTER

by WILLIAM BOOT

Nixon resurrectus

Watergate's fifteenth anniversary is an occasion to reflect on the rather bizarre tie that still binds Richard Nixon and the national news media — a long-standing love-hate relationship with elements of sadomasochism and mutual bondage. As an elected official, Nixon railed against and often flogged the press corps but could not do without it. And for reporters, Nixon was the man they delighted in despising, the conniver whom they kept slapping down only to beckon back as a "New Nixon." It has been a twisted affair.

At the moment, oddly enough, Nixon has assumed the dominant position, casting himself as the wise old man of American politics. I say oddly because the Iran-contra affair that is so much in the news is a loud, jarring echo of Watergate — a case in which White House officials saw fit to break the law or bend the Constitution because, in their view, the end justified the means.

One might have thought that Nixon, having resigned in disgrace after having virtually torn the country apart, would be consigned to a kind of journalistic Elba, where only a captive audience of family, servants, and the portraits on the walls need hear his pronouncements. And one might have thought that Iran-scam would surely reinforce his term of exile. Not so.

Last April 26, for instance, the Los Angeles Times Syndicate sent to its many subscribers an article co-authored by Nixon and Henry Kissinger that warned Ronald Reagan against agreeing too hastily to a comprehensive nuclear-arms-cut deal with the Russians. It was by no means the first such warning from foreign policy experts, but Nixon's views were widely quoted in newspapers and on radio and television.

Time magazine quickly dispatched its crack diplomatic correspondent and

Washington bureau chief, Strobe Talbott, to Nixon's Manhattan office, where, joined by chief of correspondents John F. Stacks, he sought elaboration from the man himself. Nixon was very obliging, and many of his utterances appeared verbatim in a 1,113-word May 4 report. "Not until this week has Richard Nixon spoken out publicly on the subject," *Time* disclosed in a rather breathless lead-in to the interview text.

Following this surge of media attention, Nixon was invited to the White House to discuss his arms-control reservations with Ronald Reagan — a meeting that was covered extensively in the press.

The arms-control gambit is only one recent example of how Nixon has seduced the news media into helping him paper over the image of a Watergate trickster with that of sagacious proconsul. The seduction began in earnest in 1985 when Nixon invited groups of hand-picked younger Washington reporters for intimate dinners at his Saddle River, New Jersey, home, where he held forth on geopolitics. Meanwhile, he was publishing tomes on foreign policy and offering articles or exclusive interviews to influential publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Foreign Policy*.

The latest in a long line of New Nixons began to emerge. The man whose press image had shifted over the years from McCarthyite gutter-fighter to mature statesman, from crybaby loser ("You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore") to reborn Mr. Republican, from ardent cold warrior to accomplished peacemaker to gross breacher of the public trust, was now an elder statesman. He was a phoenix risen from the ashes. *Rolling Stone* included him on a May 22, 1986, list of "Who's Hot: The New Stars In Your Future." The American Society of Newspaper Editors gave

him a standing ovation at its 1986 convention, and laughed immoderately when he offered his advice for avoiding future Watergates: "Just destroy the tapes." *Newsweek* devoted a 3,700-word May 19, 1986, cover article to Nixon, titled "He's Back." It concluded that Nixon's resurrection as a figure of respect was an accomplished fact.

Ironically, even as the news media carry this latest New Nixon along the highway to political rehabilitation, the Old Nixon is still very much alive — stonewalling and covering up secrets of his presidency. His lawyers have blocked release of some 75,000 pages of sensitive Nixon-era documents held by the National Archives in Washington. A key Nixon argument for non-disclosure has a familiar ring: "executive privilege."

What the documents contain is a mystery, but it is unlikely that they are very flattering to him. Indeed, they were painstakingly selected for permanent oblivion by a researcher who spent some three years poring over a million pages on Nixon's behalf. John Ehrlichman, the Nixon domestic policy adviser who served eighteen months in prison for Watergate crimes while Nixon enjoyed a pardon, recently wrote of a long, rambling 1971 conversation in which Nixon spoke of the need to censor his presidential documents.

"When I retire, I'm going to spend my evenings by the fireplace going through those boxes," Ehrlichman quoted Nixon as saying. "There are things in there that ought to be burned. No one needs to see those things."

Nixon did not contest the release of some 1.5 million pages, which the archives staff has made available to the press in batches over the past few months, giving rise to a rump Nixon

administration press corps that has had to spend hours in a drab Alexandria, Virginia, warehouse, sifting through tons of material. I can attest from personal experience that the work is excruciatingly boring — slow torture. It is Nixon's revenge on the news media and, so far, has turned up little of note.

(Of some interest, though, were documents that seemed to complement Nixon's infamous "enemies list" — a news media "friends" list, including Tom Jarriel of ABC and NBC's Herb Kaplow and John Chancellor. Other memos revealed a more familiar, brooding Nixon, who regarded most reporters as enemies and instructed his subordinates to treat them with contempt. In one memo, Nixon ordered: "Under absolutely no circumstances is anyone on the White House staff, on any subject, to respond to an inquiry from *The New York Times* unless and until I give express permission. . . .")

So far, at least, Richard Nixon's p.r. campaign has been effective. To quote John Dean, another ex-loyalist who spent time behind bars, Nixon has been "running for ex-president and he has won." The press has been an essential tool in that victory.

Why not let Nixon project an elder statesman image? one might argue. After all, he is an acknowledged foreign affairs expert who engineered the opening to China and quickened the pace of détente with the Soviet Union. Why let Watergate overshadow those contributions and that experience?

This, of course, is Nixon's own argument — the underlying theme of his books and articles — and it overlooks the magnitude of Watergate. Whatever Nixon might say, Watergate was much more than a botched break-in at Democratic headquarters and an indiscretion over some Oval Office tapes. Nixon and his high command were implicated in obstructing justice, illegal bugging, perjury, evading taxes, violating campaign finance laws, and employing the CIA, the FBI, and the IRS to bedevil political foes. Oval Office tapes reveal a president who matter-of-factly discussed payment of hush money to imprisoned Watergate felons: "To try to cut our losses . . . is to require approximately a million dol-



lars to take care of the jackasses who are in jail. That can be arranged. . . ."

Under the circumstances, soliciting Nixon's views as a foreign policy expert is rather like asking John Wilkes Booth, as he dashes from Ford's Theater, for an actor's evaluation of the play. There are experts available who rival Nixon when it comes to foreign policy expertise and who share his basic geopolitical outlook — among them Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Alexander Haig. If a reporter needs a comment from such a person, or if an editor needs an article, why not go to one of them?

On the matter of Nixon's "resurrection," the news media have given him a particularly untoward boost by employing circular logic. First, they quoted him on foreign policy, ran interviews with him regarding arms control, etc., etc. Then they cited those very quotations and interviews as evidence that Nixon had been rehabilitated. *Newsweek's* "He's Back" cover story, for instance, cited a Nixon interview with David Frost and *Rolling Stone's* "Rising Star" prediction, among other signs of revival. *The New York Times* (June 13, 1985) cited earlier interviews with *The*

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Wall Street Journal and *Time*. Of course, each report that Nixon is back provides further justification for seeking foreign affairs comment from him. These comments provide additional evidence that Nixon is back. This is Alice in Wonderland reasoning.

Why are journalists building Nixon back up? Some critics have suggested that it is because the news media only pay lip service to principle, have a very short memory, and are all too willing to ignore past transgressions for the sake of a pithy quote or fresh angle. There is something to this accusation.

It is also true that Nixon was and is a perversely attractive figure for journalists, despite the battering he gave them over the years. Press veterans of the White House still miss covering him. One of them — a wire man and confirmed Democrat who spoke to me on the condition he not be identified — said he simply loved reporting on Nixon. Those were the days. Nixon was "crazy," unpredictable, enigmatic. One day, out of the blue, he would impound congressionally authorized funds; the next, he would declare Charles Manson guilty when the man was still on trial. The next, he would bait Dan Rather or take the presidential butler on a manic predawn tour of Washington. Reagan, even in the midst of the Iran scandal, has been a much duller president to cover.

However, the desire to be entertained (and perhaps even slapped again) by a regalvanized Nixon is not much justification for resurrecting a pariah. Certain Nixon happenings do merit coverage — e.g., foreign travels and White House consultations — but afterward might it not be best to replace the cork in the genie's bottle?

All aboard the UFO

In the spring and summer of 1987, as ordinary folk went about their business, something extraordinary was taking place in America, something that would seem unbelievable were it not for the physical evidence: accounts of space-alien visits and UFO abductions landed mysteriously in the mainstream press. The reported claims bore an eerie like-

ness to stories which had been appearing for years in supermarket tabloids and which I had always lumped in the fictitious BIGFOOT BABY ALIVE AND KICKING category. Yet I have actual newspaper clippings and videotapes that prove beyond doubt that these reports indeed appeared in major news outlets, including ABC and *The New York Times*. What was going on?

For one thing, a conference on UFOs at Washington's American University in June had lured a number of news organizations, including the wires and television networks. It featured leading lights of UFOlogy who claimed, among other things, that space aliens were kidnapping people for medical study and that newly discovered documents revealed a "cosmic Watergate" centered in Washington: presidents had supposedly covered up evidence of alien visits for forty years, despite the leakiness of the federal bureaucracy and the nosiness of the D.C. press corps.

UFO press reports were also inspired by recent publication of two nonfiction books on "abduction" cases — *Intruders*, by conference participant Budd Hopkins (Random House), and the best-selling *Communion*, by Whitley Strieber (Morrow) — and by UFO researcher William Moore's circulation of a supposedly official document describing the discovery of four space-alien bodies.

Close encounters with such paranormal claims appear to afflict us reporters with a kind of journalistic schizophrenia. We are possessed by an overpowering desire to spin an entertaining yarn but at the same time are torn by a strong conflict on how to proceed:

- Should we approach the whole thing as a joke, and risk angering the growing segment of our audience that believes in the paranormal? (Forty-two percent of adults say they have had contact with the dead, up from 27 percent in 1973, according to a recent University of Chicago poll.)
- Or should we treat the matter as if it were serious and risk yielding to the temptation to state the pro-UFO case too strongly?

The Washington Post took the first, amused approach in two lengthy articles on "abduction" on March 9 and June

29. (*Post* reporter Curt Suplee, writing of *Communion* author Strieber, who says he has been abducted, observed: "By his own account, he's a bit odd: 'I remember being terrified as a little boy by an appearance of Mr. Peanut.'") The pieces were good fun, but perhaps not totally open-minded.

ABC News followed the second avenue when it aired two lengthy reports on alleged abductions and alien visits — *Nightline*, June 24 (pegged to the conference), and *20/20*, May 14. The reports were strongly biased toward the UFO believers, who got to make their case at length. *Intruders* author Hopkins, for instance, said he had interviewed some 140 people, many under hypnosis, who described being kidnapped by dome-headed four-foot aliens, subjected to medical experiments, and released. He said that most of his subjects had never met one another, yet they had recounted details they could not have concocted independently — for example, needles inserted into their bodies, leaving strange scars; and mysterious hieroglyphics reproduced under hypnosis.

Given the incredible nature of such claims, one might have thought that ABC would give the doubters' arguments heavy weight. But according to my line count of the program transcripts, airtime for UFO proponents exceeded airtime for the skeptics by a ratio of about four to one on *Nightline* and roughly seven to one on *20/20* (which quoted more than ten UFO believers and only one skeptical source). Philip Klass, a Washington-based contributing editor of *Aviation Week & Space Technology* and the guest skeptic on *Nightline*, had hardly begun his rebuttal before the show was over. Klass, perhaps America's leading UFO debunker, had no time to present his argument that the "victims," highly suggestible under hypnosis, become convinced of the reality of what, in fact, are nightmares or delusions.

One might have thought that ABC would subject the abduction believers to tough cross-examination, but it was quite gentle. Among questions *not* asked on either program: Aren't the aliens de-

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scribed by the victims uncannily similar to the ones in the film *Close Encounters*, Mr. Hopkins? Do you really expect us to give you any credence without letting us question all alleged victims and examining their scars?

ABC's approach was mirrored in *People* magazine, which devoted much of a 1,765-word May 11 UFO piece to *Communion* author Strieber, whose book details his own supposed abductions. *People* spent only two paragraphs discussing the skeptics and observed: "The introspective author of popular horror novels like *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger*, Strieber is hardly the sort to risk his reputation in the service of mere sensationalism." Maybe not. But his reported \$1 million advance would certainly have sweetened the pot.

Something else that has inflamed reporters' imaginations is a document that UFOlogist Moore told the American University conference had been leaked to him by U.S. intelligence sources. Dated November 18, 1952, it is supposedly a briefing paper for President-elect Eisenhower prepared by "Majes-

tic-12," a secret UFO intelligence panel. The document said military scientists were studying the remains of "four small human-like bodies [that] had apparently ejected" from a flying saucer that crashed in New Mexico in July 1947. The document was quoted in newspapers, including *The New York Times*, which discussed it in some detail on the front page of its June 16 science section, which also carried a photo of the supposed briefing paper.

Most news accounts, including the *Times*'s, noted that there were doubts as to the document's authenticity, but suggested that it could be genuine. The suggestion irks Klass, who says that the document is such an obvious hoax, so riddled with implausibilities and internal inconsistencies, that it should not be quoted with a straight face. For instance, in July 1947, Eisenhower was Army chief of staff, in command of the officers who supposedly found the alien remains. Yet the document was written as if Eisenhower had never heard of the incident. Did its supposed author think Ike was so senile that, at sixty-two, he would

have forgotten the most remarkable event of the century? This is but one of several Klass arguments that seemingly put the lie to the cosmic Watergate's smoking gun.

In his *Nightline* appearance, Klass issued a challenge to ABC: if the network thought there was only a 1 percent chance these reports of UFO contact were true, it ought to launch an all-out investigation with its fifty best reporters. If they came back with confirmation, it would be the biggest scoop of all time. But, if not, the network ought to tell the public, "It's nonsense and there has never been so great a con job done on the news media."

Klass really got the knife in with this comment, because, of course, most of us do not take UFO claims seriously at all. We might pretend to, for the sake of telling a good story, but we would not launch an in-depth investigation for fear of wasting time and becoming a laughingstock. If we are not prepared to investigate, we are in no position either to present UFO reports as serious news or to dismiss them as jokes. ■

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COMMENT

Swept away

In the dawn of the television age it was often said that television would liberate us from journalism. No longer would we have to depend on fallible and possibly biased reporters to tell us what our political leaders were doing and saying and thinking. Instead, we would see them face to face and form our own judgments, our vision unobscured by middlemen.

In a sense, that is what television did for us this summer when we came face to face with Oliver North. We saw the tears, we heard the catch in his throat, we watched the play of expressions across his face: the injured innocence, the righteous anger, the boyish charm, the roguish grin (as when he claimed he had shredded documents in the very presence of Justice Department document collectors). It was a riveting spectacle, none the less so because it was clear that North — perhaps this was the key to his instant stardom? — was a composite of a hundred heroes of television dramas: the fearless maverick, driven by idealism, doing battle against ignorance and apathy in order to secure justice and a better world.

But while the camera could show us, close up, the many faces of Oliver North, there was much that it could not tell us — and will never be able to tell us. The camera has no memory. It knows nothing of history. It cannot analyze or provide context. It is the job of the television journalist to make up for these deficiencies. In the case of Oliver North, the job was to help us to see beyond what Dan Rather called the "electrifying test of wills and test of skills" to the real question that the committee, in its often self-serving and long-winded but occasionally eloquent fashion, was trying to explore. That question, of course, was how it had come to pass that an outlaw government, shielded by a wall of lies and deception, had been able to establish itself. The responsibility of the anchor people and reporters covering the hearings was to relate what we were seeing to the politics of contra aid and anticomunism, and to the overarching question, which we thought had been disposed of in the wake of Watergate, of how we can protect constitutional government from being subverted by the president and his men.

How good a job did television journalists do? There was certainly ground for Carl Bernstein's complaint, expressed in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, that the networks too often treated the hearings as a sporting event — as when, "on at least two of the networks, Colonel North was declared 'the winner' in his exchanges with the congressional counsels." Perhaps more serious was a tendency, as the

yellow telegrams piled up at the witness table, to join those members of the committee who were scrambling to climb aboard the North bandwagon. At times during their daytime coverage the anchormen seemed lost in admiration for the witness's mastery of their own medium. At other times they seemed swept away by the tide of events, helpless to cope with the symbiotic power of the lieutenant colonel and the TV camera.

On the evening news, the anchors and reporters came closer to holding their own. They tried to break the spell cast by North by reminding viewers, as Tom Brokaw did at one point, that "Colonel North has acknowledged, of course, that he lied to Congress, that he misled Congress, that he arranged false chronologies and rearranged documents." Moreover, if the networks gave North ample time to make his anti-Congress, pro-contra case, they also allowed committee members time to remind the unapologetic witness — and the viewing public — of the essentials of democracy and constitutional government.

Still, even when given a little time to reflect on the day's events, the networks seemed reluctant to displease the charismatic colonel's many fans. CBS could surely have found better ways of using its limited time on July 9 — a day when Ollie, to use a sporting term, won going away in the hearing room — than to air a puffy profile of Betsy North (a family friend: "She's a very strong woman. As a matter of fact, the last time I met with Ollie North he said that now he knows that women are the stronger sex"). On another evening, a dramatic and highly revealing episode was ignored by all three networks. This was Senator Inouye's devastating rebuttal of North's charge that American lives had been lost in the Libyan raid as a direct result of leaks by congressmen. Inouye read aloud headlines or sentences from day after day of press coverage showing that all of the leaking had been done by the administration itself. (Indeed, as *Newsweek* pointed out, one of the busiest of the leakers on occasion has been North himself.)

To our thinking, by far the best performance, day in and day out, was turned in not by the commercial networks but by public television. During breaks in the hearings, Judy Woodruff, Elizabeth Drew, and Cokie Roberts dispassionately annotated what viewers had seen and heard, relating North's testimony to the complicated world of Washington politics and laying out the implications for Reagan's presidency. The very crispness of their comments was a refreshing antidote to the lieutenant colonel's histrionics.

Later each day, on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, Woodruff skillfully wove together — and put into perspective — lengthy excerpts from the day's proceedings.

All in all, the event and its coverage were a reminder that, in the age of television, it is the all-seeing but mindless camera from which we need to be liberated, and that the job can be done only by journalists with a tough-minded approach to their work — an approach by no means always evident in July.

Darts and laurels

Dart: to *The Sunday Advocate*, Stamford, Connecticut, for a temporary loss of consciousness. About a third of the copies of its June 28 edition were on their way to readers before editors came to and corrected a page-one, six-column headline that read FINDING THE MAN TO FOLLOW MCKINNEY. The headline spanned a pair of reports on the fight to fill the late Representative Stewart McKinney's congressional seat being waged by various Republican and Democratic candidates, two of whom were women. (*The Advocate* apologized to the women candidates in a page-two editor's note the following day.)

Laurel: to *The New York Times* and business writer William Glaberson, for a stomach-turning report on the inhuman conditions imposed on workers in the meat-packing industry, the most hazardous in the country. In painfully graphic detail, the 3,500-word piece (front page, business section, June 14) evoked the heat and cold, grease and stench, that permeate their lives; described the experiences of men and women injured and permanently maimed; and explored the various factors — intensifying competition in a declining industry, dangerously accelerated production rates, lax health and safety regulation on the part of OSHA, the ever-weakening position of unions — that have combined to create, in the 1980s, an occupational Jungle all too reminiscent of the one exposed by Upton Sinclair eighty-one years ago.

Dart: to the *Las Vegas Sun*, for journalistic streetwalking. The paper sold the front page (as well as pages 2, 5, and 6) of a special May 19 "Street Edition" to the Showtime cable television service, and distributed some 10,000 copies of the adulterated paper to delegates attending a cable-TV convention in the Las Vegas area. The four pages of promotional fluff were wrapped around two pages of legitimate news stories, some of which were nothing more than incomplete jumps from the page-one pieces that the Showtime stuff had bumped. Among the stories published under the paper's logo: SHOWTIME SUMMER OFFERINGS ARE DIVERSE; 7 OUT OF 10 BOX OFFICE HITS TO SHOWTIME; SHOWTIME GROWS BY MORE THAN 500,000; and a report on an upcoming campaign to attract new subscribers to Prime Cable, a local Showtime carrier that happens to be controlled by the same family that owns the *Las Vegas Sun*.

Laurel: to WBBM-TV, Chicago, and investigative reporter Pam Zekman, for an eye-opening examination of the various scams systematically practiced at some of the largest

private outpatient centers in the area. Drawing on interviews with victimized patients, whistle-blowing doctors, former employees, and experts in insurance fraud, the five-part series (beginning June 8) revealed an alarming pattern of needless tests, phony billings, deceptive advertising, and botched surgery, as well as a nearly blind state department of public health. And, in the same vein, a **Dart:** to WLS-TV, Chicago, and its medical editor, Dr. Bruce Dan. As pointed out by TV critic Robert Feder in a salutary June 11 column in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Dr. Dan" had presented, in a special two-part report only six months before, two of the principal targets of Zekman's investigation — Dr. Regaldo Florendo of Urban Health Services and Dr. Donald LaMarca of Anucare — as reputable experts on the subject of the growing trend toward surgicenters and their advantages to patients. Although during the course of his report Dr. Dan did take pains to advise those contemplating treatment to verify the background of center and surgeon, he somehow neglected to check such vital signs himself.

Dart: to the Missoula, Montana, *Missoulian*. In the midst of a statewide controversy over a Republican proposal to enact a general sales tax (while reducing taxes on property), the paper published, commendably enough, a March 20 report on Democratic charges that some Montana newspapers, whose publishers stood to gain from the plan, were slanting coverage and failing to print articles examining alternatives for reform. At the same time, however, the *Missoulian* killed a sidebar to the story reporting allegations by a Democratic legislator that, in return for his public dissent from his party's anti-sales tax stand, the legislative sponsor of the tax bill had promised him a favorable editorial in the *Missoulian*. And a related **Dart:** to the Great Falls, Montana, *Tribune*, for a March 20 editorial that embraced the plan for "broadening the state's tax structure and giving property owners some relief" — but neglected to say that the proposed modification of the property tax system would save the *Tribune*, over the next twenty years, an estimated one million dollars. And, finally, a mini-**Dart:** to the Montana Press Association, which, as representative of the many publishers who had advocated a tax on sales, set about — with some embarrassment — urging a Senate committee to exempt the state's newspapers from such a tax. As the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* observed in a March 30 editorial headed HAVING YOUR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO, "It's easy to lobby for new taxes if somebody else pays them."

Dart: to George McClelland, executive sports editor of the Norfolk, Virginia, *Virginian-Pilot*, for abuse of power. McClelland devoted his entire July 3 column to a blow-by-blow account of his month-long bout with Price's, a local appliance store, as he unsuccessfully tried to get his television set repaired. Concluding with yet another description of yet another unavailing conversation in which a Price representative had promised to have the head of the service department call him back, McClelland flexed his journalistic muscle and observed, "Perhaps he didn't get the message. Maybe he'll get it today." ■

Some people think this photograph is more explosive than this bomb.

No pictures allowed.
Not of civil unrest. Not of the police.

Not in South Africa after the government's harsh press restrictions were announced in June 1986.

The only way photographer David Turnley of Knight-Ridder's Detroit Free Press could do his job was to risk getting arrested. Turnley was detained, searched, interrogated and released.

Despite the ban, Turnley, based in Johannesburg, has continued to document

the struggle. The imbalance of power between South Africa's 24 million blacks and 4.8 million whites. Living under apartheid. In a land borrowing time. In a place perpetually in mourning as thousands die in Soweto, Swaziland and Mamelodi.

A 16-page collection of David Turnley's photographs was published in the Detroit Free Press last December. It won the Overseas Press Club Award for photographic reporting abroad.

He feels that if restrictions get

tighter, those photos might be the last portrait of South Africa for years to come.

In South Africa, David Turnley is one of 18 staff members working at 15 Knight-Ridder foreign bureaus around the globe.

He has traveled for more than a year throughout South Africa, photographing a land of astonishing contrasts, in its worst time of strife. Few newspapers would put this kind of effort into a story. But the Detroit Free Press is a Knight-Ridder newspaper.



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HOW FREE IS THE PRESS?

An overview of Supreme Court decisions, which, while charting new areas of freedom, have fenced them in

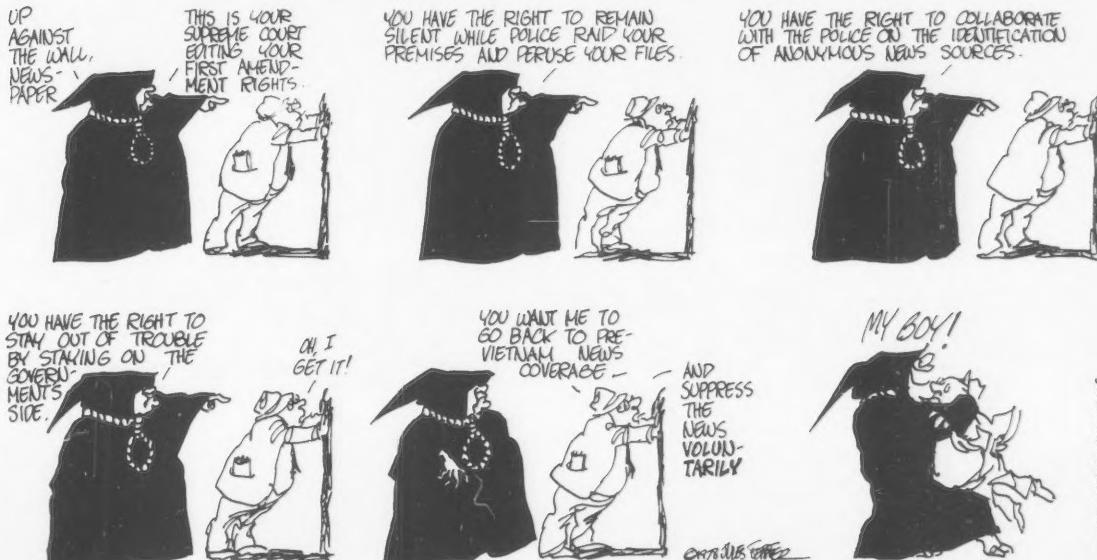
by JAMES BOYLAN

Fifty years ago this past spring, the Supreme Court abruptly punctured that era's most overinflated First Amendment balloon. Newspaper publishers, hoping to evade the regulations they saw the New Deal imposing on other businesses, had hit upon an ingenious claim — that any law that happened to make the newspaper business more troublesome or costly constituted an infringement of freedom of the press. The publishers sent The Associated Press up to what they thought

was a friendly Supreme Court to challenge the National Labor Relations Act, which, they said, violated the First Amendment by forbidding the AP to fire employees for trying to organize a union.

The Supreme Court's response was a thundering rebuff: "The publisher of a newspaper has no special immunity from the application of general laws. He has no special privilege to invade the rights and liberties of others. He must answer for libel. He may be punished for contempt of court. He is subject to the antitrust laws. Like others he must pay equitable and nondiscriminatory taxes on his business." In the next few years the Court further let the air

James Boylan is a journalism professor at the University of Massachusetts, at Amherst, where he teaches courses on press history and law.



cartoon by Jules Feiffer/The Village Voice

out of the publishers' delightful theory — first, by telling the AP that it could not maintain a monopoly in news in defiance of antitrust laws, then by informing publishers that the First Amendment did not exempt them from paying the wages and observing the working weeks specified in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Each of these reverses inspired on the nation's editorial pages a flood of eulogies for freedom of the press. But eventually it became hard for the public, and even working journalists, to take this rhetoric seriously. Tarnished for the time being with connotations of self-interest, the honorable old phrase was put into storage. Its bland successors were, alternatively, "freedom of information" or "the right to know." The freedom-of-information movement had its working side, of course — a long-term effort to improve access to government information, which ultimately produced powerful federal legislation. But on the philosophical side, as one analyst wrote in 1949, freedom of information could mean "a number of different things," and did; that was its problem. Nor was "the right to know" much better; of that phrase, John C. Merrill, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri, has written: "Defenders of press freedom have appropriated the expression . . . because it sounds more democratic than the simple term 'freedom of the press' and shifts the theoretical emphasis from a private and restricted institution (the press) to a much broader and popular base (the citizenry)." In short, it was cannier public relations.



Remote as those episodes of the 1930s may seem, they are instructive, for the cycle in which journalism floated First Amendment claims, saw them tested against reality, issued apocalyptic warnings, and, ultimately, floated a revised set of claims, has been repeated again and again. Although journalists have often considered the judiciary to be an alien and hostile force (and individual judges have certainly met that standard), in the longer run the courts, particularly the Supreme Court, have provided a useful barometer of the social-political status of journalism. Indeed, the close attention the Supreme Court has given the press over the last twenty-five years, after 180 years of relative neglect, is itself a measure of the rise of journalism in the scheme of power.

This is not to say that journalists have found the Supreme Court's attentions flattering. On the contrary, they have customarily greeted decisions in the manner of the immortal Colonel Cathcart of *Catch-22*, to whom every occurrence was either a black eye or a feather in the cap. Journalists have been particularly quick to claim black eyes. Their gloom stems in part from their feeling that any examination or definition of the First Amendment damages it, that it

should be left alone, all-pervasive and all-embracing, like a religious creed. To the extent that they cling to this naive faith, today's reporters and editors are the true heirs of the publishers of the 1930s.

Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., over the last quarter century the Supreme Court's chief interpreter of the First Amendment, noted in 1979 an addiction of the press to First Amendment rhetoric that was "as comfortable as a pair of old shoes." Journalists, he said, liked to portray themselves in a somewhat hypothetical eighteenth-century mode, as a community of humble printers and striving pamphleteers, devoted single-mindedly to the enrichment of political discourse.

The major deficiency of such rhetoric, of course, is its limited usefulness. The late twentieth-century journalistic enterprise can hardly be described convincingly as an open marketplace of many small voices, or even — as a more recent version of the marketplace theory would have it — as the common carrier of a multiplicity of opinions. Such descriptions capture neither the nature of the institution nor the present-day work of journalists. In recent years, Brennan and others have started to develop First Amendment theory appropriate to a large, intricate institution operating in a society composed of such institutions. If these efforts have not made great headway, it is because neither journalists nor courts are yet ready to give up outdated concepts and tired rhetoric.

The 1950s produced not a single major Supreme Court decision that affected the news media directly — a reflection both of the Court's preoccupation with hair-splitting decisions on the civil liberties of political dissidents and of the general unassertiveness of the press at the time. When, at the end of the decade, a major newspaper became involved in a crucial First Amendment case its participation was inadvertent, incurred through the publication of an advertisement placed by civil-rights activists rather than through a news story, and the newspaper was initially reluctant to carry the case to the Supreme Court.

As it turned out, *New York Times v. Sullivan*, decided in 1964, not only nullified a libel award of \$500,000 to an Alabama police official, but had other major consequences, inasmuch as for the first time it placed First Amendment limits upon libel actions. Specifically, the Court held that no damages could be awarded "in actions brought by public officials against critics of their official conduct" unless there was proof of "actual malice" — that is, of falsehood published knowingly or recklessly.

Although expanding, contracting, and elucidating this finding came to constitute a major share of the Court's First Amendment business in the next two decades, the decision initially created little stir. By the time journalism decided to adopt *Sullivan* as one of its charters, plaintiffs — particularly those with fame and money — had also discovered it and were learning to employ its actual-malice loophole as a deadly weapon. The need for trial courts to determine the existence or absence of actual malice opened the way to minute examination not only of the innards of newsrooms but of the interior of journalists' minds, as well.

Moreover, the First Amendment doctrine of the *Sullivan*

"One More Time—Are You Ready to Reveal Your News Sources?"



decision, while it may have removed an immediate threat, did not provide permanent security. In his opinion, which still stands as a powerful classic of judicial literature, Brennan made two major arguments: first, that history had invalidated not only the Sedition Act of 1798, which had made criticism of government punishable, but also civil actions that amounted to a modern-day equivalent of seditious libel; second, that the First Amendment should protect "the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open." By implication, the press had to remain free to carry the burden of this debate.

At the time, this formulation was considered the leading edge of First Amendment thought, incorporating as the "central meaning" of the First Amendment the protection of political speech. Yet the idea of seditious libel survived, not only in such libel actions as General Westmoreland's suit against CBS but in the other means that the federal executive has used (as in the Watergate years) to hamper and punish critics.

The *Sullivan* decision opened an era of roughly fifteen years of continual First Amendment interpretation. Scarcely a session passed without a Supreme Court ruling involving the press. Despite all the attention given to libel (a tabulation in *Editor & Publisher* listed a full dozen major libel decisions between 1964 and 1976), the focus gradually shifted. Accelerated by the rise of a more adversarial and inquiring journalism, another concern emerged.

In one context, it could be called the issue of protection for the rights of individual journalists as opposed to corporate rights. In another, it could be considered the effort to extend First Amendment law from traditional guarantees against censorship to guarantees to protect the pre-publication newsgathering process. In still another, and perhaps more fundamental, sense, it could be called the issue of autonomy — the idea, that is, that if society needed an independent, and by definition unofficial, chronicle of its doings, journalists had to be guaranteed the freedom to do that work.

The new terrain was mapped out first in the Pentagon Papers case of 1971, in which the government attempted, using generalized claims of harm to national security, to stop publication of leaked secret documents on the Vietnam war. That the government failed is, of course, now part of the history and folklore of journalism; "Victory for the Press," *Newsweek* proclaimed, and that is what journalists remember.

Textbooks subsequently have tended to dismiss the case as adding little to constitutional law, for the decision merely upheld one of the most firmly established rights of the press. Nonetheless, the case was highly revealing of the schools of thought on the Court of that day concerning the autonomy of the press. On one wing sat the proponents of an absolute First Amendment, who maintained that the government had no right to suppress news, that even stopping publication long enough to hear the case had been unconstitutional. In the center, the justices gave press freedom the benefit of doubt (known constitutionally as the "preferred position") in this instance but said that newspapers remained liable for punishment after publication. The dissenters offered the thought, expressed by Justice Harry A. Blackmun, that the "First Amendment, after all, is only one part of an entire Constitution," and that freedom of the press could well be thrown into the balance against the rest.

25th Anniversary

This is the last of

a series of articles examining important changes in the world of American journalism during the past quarter century.

In the Pentagon Papers case, the absolute wing and the center united to create the majority. But a year later, in what can arguably be called the era's pivotal journalism case, the center divided. The case is known as *Branzburg v. Hayes*, but it might more properly be known as Earl Caldwell's case, for it was in the arguments over Caldwell that the issues emerged most clearly.

Several streams of contention flowed into the dispute. The primary issue, both in Caldwell's case and in the two others linked to it, was an old one — a reporter's claim to confidentiality, specifically the right to refuse to disclose a source or other information in a court proceeding. Sometimes this claim was presented as a matter of personal ethics or honor, but here it was offered as a constitutional claim, raising a question of whether the courts would be willing to stretch First Amendment rights beyond traditional protections to actions that were purely part of the reporting process.

Two other circumstances added heat to the controversy. First, since 1966 there had existed a state of low-intensity war between the courts and the press, dating from the Supreme Court's decision in *Sheppard v. Maxwell*. In the *Sheppard* case, the Court had voided as unfair a twelve-year-old trial — Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard had been convicted of murdering his wife — that had occasioned the biggest media circus since the Lindbergh kidnapping trial of 1935 (which had resulted in the expulsion of cameras from the courtroom for the next forty or so years). The *Sheppard* opinion urged that judges use a firm hand to assure the fairness of trials. On this cue, legal groups generated a veritable dust storm of reports recommending new controls, and judges were soon enforcing restrictions that included direct restraints on reporters.

A further element of dispute arose from conditions of

covering the social and political turmoil of the 1960s. Reporters were seeking out dissidents — civil-rights and black-power agitators, radical student organizations, draft resisters, peace activists, druggies — who were also the object of scrutiny by official intelligence and enforcement agencies. Journalists grew increasingly resistant to the old practice of sharing their findings informally with, say, the FBI; such sharing not only disrupted their relations with sources but also clouded their integrity as journalists. Prosecutors thereupon became more intent on hauling reporters before grand juries and demanding the names of confidential sources.

Caldwell's was such a case. A San Francisco-based reporter for *The New York Times*, he had developed sources in the Bay Area's Black Panther organization. In February 1970, Caldwell received the first of a series of subpoenas to testify before a federal grand jury. He refused even to vouch for the accuracy of his published stories, and the *Times* lawyers dissociated themselves from him.

In the San Francisco Circuit Court of Appeals, the level below the Supreme Court, Caldwell won a deceptively ringing victory. Not only did the court specify that the government, in order to compel him to testify, had to meet strict criteria of urgency and necessity, but it added a striking declaration on the independence of the press:

The very concept of a free press requires that the news media must be accorded a measure of autonomy; that they should be free to pursue their own investigations to their own ends without fear of governmental interference; and that they should be able to protect their investigative processes. To convert newsgatherers into Department of Justice investigators is to invade the autonomy of the press by imposing a governmental function upon them.

Although to many journalists the opinion seemed to express the common sense of the situation, most courts previously had held a different view. The obligation to testify, after all, was of great strength historically, and the exemptions usually granted — e.g., for communications between lawyer and client — were under the control of the court and for the benefit of defendants. A reporter's promise of confidentiality to a source did not meet either requirement. As Justice Potter Stewart later observed, a court could grant this huge exception only if journalists were recognized as a special class.

By a hair, the Supreme Court majority proved unwilling to take that step. The opinion by Justice Byron White reached back to the cases of the 1930s and 1940s to affirm that journalists, no less than newspaper publishers, were subject to general laws. He added, sinking in the needle, that the court would not support the notion that "it is better to write about a crime than do something about it."

Stewart, in the major dissenting opinion, charged that the decision was an invitation "to annex the journalistic profession as an investigative arm of government." The journalism establishment — encompassing for once both management, the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and labor, the American Newspaper Guild — shared Stewart's alarm. The cover line of the September/October 1972 issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review* asked, "Is the First

cartoon by Bill Mauldin/Chicago Sun-Times



Amendment in Jeopardy?" and Norman E. Isaacs, former president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, replied within: "We are in a period of . . . journalistic repression. . . ."

Possibly even more corrosive than the threat of being jailed, which after all hung over only a tiny minority of journalists, was the sense from the *Branzburg* decision that society, speaking through the courts, had set a low value on the services of journalism. The Supreme Court had decided, after all, that a major component of newsgathering was not worth specific constitutional protection.

The Watergate era, a period of extraordinary government waywardness and journalistic muscle-flexing, inspired another turn of theory. Justice Stewart, building on his dissent in *Branzburg*, presented in 1974 what he called a structural theory of the First Amendment, arguing that the reference to freedom of the press in the First Amendment implied specific protection for the press as an institution. The task of this institution was to serve as a "fourth branch," an extra-constitutional check on the three constitutional branches of government, especially the executive.

Hence another name — the "checking" theory, which was given its fullest exposition in a long article by Vincent Blasi, a legal scholar, published in the 1977 *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*. Blasi worked from the premise that abuses of official power were an especially serious threat to society and that they could be countered only by a strong, independent institution, the professional press.

But in ten years the checking theory has not flown far. The Supreme Court, in addition to its residual suspicion of novelty in First Amendment matters, remained reluctant to recognize journalists as a class deserving rights beyond those of the public in general. Journalists themselves — or, perhaps more accurately, the managers of journalism's public relations — devoted their most intensive efforts to re-establishing calm after the exertions of the 1970s; they could hardly warm to a theory that appeared to give journalists the right to create more turmoil.

T

he autonomy of the press was a usually unacknowledged key issue in the crisis, or quasi-crisis, that arose late in the 1970s. The "panic" (a term used by Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times*) was touched off by the Supreme Court's decision on May 31, 1978, in a case initiated by a campus newspaper, *The Stanford Daily*, seven years before. The Court ruled that an unannounced police search of a newsroom did not infringe the First Amendment, and the press began to relive its *Branzburg* trauma. Once more it had been led by a favorable lower-court decision to expect better and once more Justice White disabused it of such hopes. The subsequent flood of



cartoon by Tony Auth/The Philadelphia Inquirer

alarmed comment complained that such searches could lead to the disclosure of confidential materials; *The Washington Post*, for example, suggested that such a raid five years before could have breached the confidentiality surrounding the greatest anonymous source of all, "Deep Throat."

In this mood of extreme stress, every incident seemed to add to the tension — the jailing of the *Times*'s Myron Farber for refusing to release his notebooks to a court in the "Dr. X" case, the decision of a Court of Appeals (left untouched by the Supreme Court) that the government could obtain reporters' toll-call records without obtaining their permission, the 1979 Supreme Court case that barred reporters from certain court proceedings. Finally, there was a series of unfavorable libel decisions, culminating in a ruling in the case of Lieutenant Colonel Anthony B. Herbert (whom CBS and *The Atlantic* had charged with lying about war crimes) that journalists could be questioned in libel proceedings about their "state of mind." The Herbert ruling also destroyed the idea of an "editorial privilege" — a right to withhold from testimony the intramural discussions that took place in preparing the news. Allen Neuharth, head of the Gannett organization, seemed almost beside himself: "This is another indication that this Supreme Court really is setting itself above the Constitution."

The symbolic response was a gathering in January 1980 in Philadelphia, apparently patterned after the Continental Congress or the Constitutional Convention of 1787, called the First Amendment Congress. This convocation, composed to a great degree of representatives of press organizations, contemplated dourly not only the damage done by the Supreme Court to journalists' conceptions of the Constitution but also the seemingly low regard in which the public held the freedoms that journalists claimed (on behalf of that same public, of course).

The First Amendment Congress formalized a siege mentality that has persisted. Journalists viewed the series of multimillion-dollar libel suits in the 1980s — by General Westmoreland against CBS, by Ariel Sharon against *Time*, and by William Tavoulareas, president of Mobil Oil, against *The Washington Post* — as major threats to investigative reporting. They also saw the Reagan administration as a hostile force. Although it largely avoided Nixon-style ven-



"And now Bob Ferguson,
with an analysis of our reporting staff's 'state of mind'
during the preparation of tonight's news."

drawing by Dana Fradon; © 1979 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

dettas, it sought in a dozen ways to hamper reporting on defense and national security matters, most dramatically in leaving the press behind when it invaded Grenada. Moreover, in the 1980s political attacks on the media, primarily from the activist wings of conservatism and big business, focused on the theme that journalists enjoyed too much freedom; in particular, Mobil Oil carried on an advertising campaign to discredit the *Sullivan* decision. Such pressures led to stress, feelings of rejection, and, as always, hyperbole. A book published earlier this year was called *The War Against the Press*, and this year, too, the president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors declared flatly, "The press is not free."

Yet, curiously, the 1980s have produced few changes decisive enough to justify alarm. The immediate problems that led to the convening of the First Amendment Congress soon faded. The Supreme Court obviated the open-courtroom issue in 1980 with its decision in *Richmond Newspapers v. Virginia*, which ruled that trials should be open to the public. Justice Brennan's concurring opinion went a step farther by arguing that access to information was constitutionally guaranteed and that some forms of newsgathering were therefore protected. The consternation over the *Stanford Daily* decision was relieved when a federal statute restricting newsroom searches was enacted late in the Carter administration.

Other threats began to appear to be at least manageable. While big libel trials usually presented the defendants in an unflattering light, few cases were actually lost. Colonel Herbert's case was tossed out of court in 1986, after twelve years of contention; Sharon won, at best, a split decision; Westmoreland decided to settle for a few conciliatory words; and the award of damages to Tavoulareas was reversed on appeal. Nor did the Reagan administration's secrecy policies seem so daunting after the exposure of the Iran-contra affair. While the public was not yet holding rallies in support of the press, at least the conservative effort to discredit the media appeared to have slowed.

Equally significant, there was less action in the Supreme

Court. The fifteen years ending roughly in 1980 had produced a record of several dozen rulings defining and redefining the rights of the press — an unprecedented burst of activity in this field. Where a near void had existed, there now had come into being a constitutional law of the press. The whole network of new constitutional law could be looked upon as a kind of charter, laying out the territory, extensive but not limitless, in which the press might operate freely.

Yet journalists have continued to believe that freedom of the press has been seriously compromised and that the Burger Court was largely responsible. Such feelings are not unreasonable, for each decision that laid out a new sector of freedom also placed a fence around it. Thus, while it helped to protect the press against libel suits, the new constitutional law on libel at the same time made news and editorial decisions increasingly subject to examination in the courts and thus less free. Similarly, while the Pentagon Papers case upheld the barriers against prior restraint, it suggested at the same time the conditions under which prior restraint might be imposed. These and many other decisions provide a truly ambiguous legacy, not least because the parsing and hairsplitting of the Burger Court have not left a set of principles that can be readily explained or widely understood. The tangle that is First Amendment libel law is the prime example. In the last year or two, Blasi, the proponent of the checking theory, has turned to a new proposition — that First Amendment decisions should enunciate standards of freedom so clear and unambiguous that they can withstand the stormiest of times, a kind of batten-down-the-hatches theory.

L

ittle of the work of the Supreme Court in recent years has met such a standard of clarity. Yet such clear principles may well have been beyond reach, for the decisions of the Court have reflected the indecisiveness of the struggle over the First Amendment. The press can contend, with reason, that it still lacks essential freedoms — notably, to report on national security matters without fear of retaliation, and to protect confidential sources. Its adversaries can say, on the other hand, that the Court has given to the press much that it has sought. The result has been a kind of stand-off.

This stalemate may not last indefinitely. The changing of the guard at the Supreme Court has brought to the fore justices with distinctly off-center, not to say eccentric, First Amendment views. In any future struggle over freedom of the press, journalism's old weapons — absolutism, overstatement, and self-pity — are likely to prove inadequate, and yet, given their long service, it is equally unlikely that they will be abandoned. ■



Ellen Rivenburgh sells a Free Press to an old-timer at the paper's Greenfield, Iowa, office.

A small-town paper confronts the farm crisis

How an Iowa editor, himself hard-pressed, tries to strike a balance between hope and despair

by MICHAEL HOYT

Iowa highway 92, a two-lane blacktop, is banked with blue and yellow wildflowers. It swings through billowing hills with rows of corn and soybeans marching over them, past windmills and silos, cows and hogs, past a sign pointing to John Wayne's birthplace, and into Adair County, population about 9,000. It intersects highway 25 at the town of Greenfield, the county seat. Greenfield has a handsome courthouse for a centerpiece, almost a hundred years old, surrounded by trees and benches and the low-rise buildings of a quiet town square.

The *Adair County Free Press* is in a narrow brick building just off the square. There is usually a hum of activity inside, with Ed Sidey's deep voice providing the bass tones. Sidey owns the weekly newspaper and writes and edits almost everything in it. He's a big man of sixty-two with gray hair and eyes and, when I met him, a gray tie and pants.

He starts his workday at Toad's Place, a cafe across the square where his coffee club meets. Next door to Toad's is Mercury Cleaners, and on the morning of the June day that

I arrived, the dry-cleaning shop had provided the coffee drinkers with Topic A by pasting a fresh going-out-of-business sign in its window. The boiler for Mercury's steam presser had blown. A new one would cost \$10,000, and the owner felt that there was too much stay-press polyester and not enough cash in Greenfield these days to borrow that kind of money. Sidey shook his head as he talked about it later: "It's another empty building on the square."

Just a few days earlier the gas company had announced that it was consolidating and would move its office out of town. Back in December the Foodland grocery store, once a regular buyer of full-page ads in the *Free Press*, went under. Some months before that it had been the John Deere farm-implement dealer, the fertilizer and farm-chemical coop, the electronic appliance dealer, Coast-to-Coast Hardware, and so forth. But in July there was better news. Mercury Cleaners found a buyer, a story Sidey ran on page one. When a small community is walking a tightrope over an economic abyss, the death and rebirth of a dry-cleaning shop is high drama.

There are two schools of thought in Iowa about the farm

Michael Hoyt is an associate editor at the Review.



CJR/George Ceolla/Black Star

Morning at Toad's:
Editor Ed Sidey
(left, in tie)
starts each day
with his coffee
club at Toad's
Place cafe,
where members
blend serious
discussion with
joshing about
who's going to get
stuck with the bill.

crisis these days. One side says that it is bottoming out, that things are finally starting to get better; the other says that it's only changing gears, that the underlying problems remain, so keep the seat belt buckled. Each side cites its evidence, from hog prices to debt ratios to bank-failure rates. One kind of expert that rarely gets consulted is the farm-community newspaper editor, who not only covers the story week after week but measures it constantly on the paper's own balance sheet. The big media parachute into the nervous heartland to take a pulse now and then, but Ed Sidey lives there.

Adair County may not be the country's geographic center, but it seems like the middle of America. The county seat, about an hour's drive southwest of Des Moines, is set on a slight north/south ridge, so runoff water on one side of town drains toward the Mississippi and on the other side it heads west toward the Missouri. Adair's voters flow both ways, too. They went for Ronald Reagan in 1984, but turned around in the same election and helped vote in a Democratic senator, Tom Harkin, by an even greater margin. This year Jesse Jackson set up his Iowa headquarters in Greenfield, after a hastily scheduled speech there on Superbowl Sunday drew an overflow crowd. The county lies between the gravitational fields of the conservative *Omaha World-Herald* and the somewhat more liberal *Des Moines Register*.

But it's the *Free Press* that serves as a window into Adair County life. The lead story in the April 29 paper, for example, tells how alert citizens helped nail a trio of alleged bad-check artists passing through Greenfield in a car with out-of-county plates. While one of the three had been trying to cash a check at Carlson's Super Valu, another was spotted lifting a purse in the parking lot. Serious crimes are as rare as locked doors in Greenfield.

Other front-page news includes a legislative coffee session at the chamber of commerce for a U.S. congressman and two state politicians, some steps taken toward building a new community center, and a heat wave. There are three obituaries on page one, two of them for farmers, and pictures

of games and dancing at the parent-supervised all-night party after the Greenfield High School prom.

Inside, Sidey's editorial pushes the community-center idea and his "Thoughts at Random" is about adjusting to computers. (The column can be about anything; after a recent weekend at a lake, Sidey wrote a haunting and evocative piece about how he and his wife, Linda, had witnessed the killing of two baby loons by an angry male, possibly a rejected suitor — about how nature is not as rational as we'd like to believe. Another time he reflected on which fast foods are best to eat while driving.) In the Social News pages, the reader learns that the Home Life department of the Greenfield Federated Woman's Club had enjoyed a presentation about "Famous and Remarkable Iowa Women" at its annual spring brunch, after each member answered the roll call with the name of "a woman I would like to have known." The Literary Department of the same club, at its brunch, answered the roll call with "the name of an Indian tribe," appropriate because Maxine Pickrell was reviewing Louis L'Amour's *Jubal Sackett*.

On the agriculture page there is a story about how neighbors, eighteen men with ten tractors, planted the crops for Howard and Barbara Nelson; the story notes that Howard Nelson would soon be undergoing chemotherapy. The farm crisis is not prominent in this issue, but it's there: a page-three story about how Jesse Jackson had got the National Conference of Black Mayors to back the Harkin-Gephardt Family Farm Act; an item about how the Iowa branch of the Farmers Home Administration is handling delinquent loans (collecting or rescheduling payments, refinancing, liquidating); and, on page five, an ad for a farm auction. Ivan and Thelma Chafa were selling everything, down to two rolls of Red Brand barbed wire and a set of fruit jars.

Adair County is set somewhere in that wide and invisible borderline between cropland to the east and grazing land to the west, and it is below the terminus of the latest glacier, which left northern Iowa so flat and fertile. For those reasons its agriculture is fairly diversified, with livestock — especially hogs — fetching pretty good prices these days. Greenfield, population about 2,200, has a bit of industry, too —

a limestone quarry, a window-assembly factory, and a mostly automated printing-ink plant.

These buffers have helped, but the county has its problems. Most of its farms are medium-sized family operations, averaging 320 acres, Sidey says. They don't have the outside income that smaller "weekend" and larger corporate farmers can lean on. As everywhere in agriculture, the trouble is unevenly distributed. A farmer without debt, who bought his land before the inflation of the 1970s, say, and who chose hogs instead of soybeans, for example, or who is in a position to tap the fat and rumbling pipeline of government subsidies, is likely to be doing well. In a statewide survey this past spring, Iowa State University's extension service found that half of the state's farmers were in a strong financial position, a little under a quarter were financially stable, and a little more than one in four were financially stressed.

Willis Martin might put himself in the last category. The weather-beaten farmer dropped by the *Free Press* when I was there, and, as Sidey paged through past issues for examples of his farm-crisis coverage, the conversation turned to how it all began. "When the interest rates went up, that's when all hell broke loose," says Martin. At sixty-eight, he farms 120 acres and "can't quit," he says, because debt and low farmland prices wouldn't leave him enough to retire on. Martin was not one of those farmers who started or expanded in the seventies, when Adair County farmland was up to \$2,000 an acre. (Expansion, encouraged by the government and the lenders, was "kind of a madness," Sidey says.) But Martin did borrow money, and got caught in the same trap as those who did expand — paying off more and more expensive loans with crops that brought in less and less on the market. In a world rather suddenly awash with food, commodity prices plunged.

Martin was hit with drought one year and hail the next, so "for the first time in my life I had to borrow money to operate. Then, any money that I had went to the interest.

Consequently, I didn't have enough for the principal. It seemed like every year I was borrowing more." With thousands of farmers in similar shape, the value of land began to drop. Sidey pointed to a December 1983 headline in his paper: FARM VALUES DROP 12% IN ADAIR, with a story underneath noting that values had already dropped 13 percent the year before. Adair County farmland now sells for around \$800 an acre. As land values plunged, lending institutions that had loaned money based on high-profit projections and \$2,000-an-acre collateral began to roll up their sleeves.

With income reduced on so many farms, the businesses in the towns — including the newspapers — began to feel the chill. Iowa, a state that likes to claim the nation's highest literacy rate, is built out of small towns, and most of them have their own paper. About fifteen weeklies have disappeared since 1980, and Bill Monroe, executive director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, is surprised that number isn't higher. "Main Street is all the newspapers live or die by," he says. "Given the numbers of foreclosures, bankruptcies, people leaving the state, it's amazing that we don't have two hundred and fifty-five newspapers now instead of three hundred and fifty-five. It's amazing that they've hung in there."

Sidey, who was voted in as the newspaper association's new president in April, is among those hanging in. Like a lot of Iowa editors, he came to journalism by way of family tradition. He can point across the town square to the pool hall where his great-grandfather and his grandfather first put out Greenfield's paper almost a century ago, and he's been doing it himself now for thirty-two years.

There are usually a couple of pens and a notepad in Sidey's shirt pocket, and his office, hung with maps, clipboards, and a camera, looks a little cramped for a man who is six-feet-two. He likes a martini before dinner, but he won't advertise liquor in the *Free Press*, and the thin brown



CJR/George Cecilia/Black Star

Farmer, debtor:
After drought
one year and hail
the next, Willis
Martin had to
borrow to operate
his farm. Then,
like a lot of
farmers, he tried
to pay rising
interest costs with
crops that brought
less and less
on the market.



Working day: Ed Sidey (top) concentrates on the front page of the Free Press while Linda Sidey and Ginger Thompson (above) lay out the inside pages. Computer-set type is used for the paper, but for small commercial printing jobs that the Free Press takes on, Millard Summers (below) clicks away on the same linotype machine he's used for forty years.



cigarettes he smokes look out of character, as if they were somebody else's idea. To relax, he flies model airplanes and catches fish. He's a solid citizen, thoughtful and articulate; lots of people stop by his office for a word or two, generally undeterred by the work piled on his desk.

There is more work than there used to be. Since the farm economy went bad, Sidey is down three full-time employees, including his news reporter, and has cut back the hours of the eight people still working on the paper and on printing jobs. One office wall is covered with journalism awards — the one he is proudest of is for an eight-part series on problems at the county hospital — but that kind of reporting will have to wait for better days. "The extent of our news coverage has suffered," he says. "You do what you can afford to do, as best you can." In 1979 and 1980, the *Free Press* would run from eighteen to twenty-four pages; now it's usually down to fourteen.

"We're undergoing the same kind of thing that [the farmers] are," Sidey says. "We're kind of like the rest of the merchants around town: we're hanging on. But in the inflationary period I had debt, you see, that now hangs over me like a sword."

Sidey has lost about \$20,000 to advertisers who went under and never paid up, and he concedes he was a little slow to cut costs when the bottom fell out: "I'm not a good businessman, you see. I had people that I felt a loyalty to, to keep them on and not cut back their hours. So I was borrowing money to meet payroll and newsprint costs and things like that. I owe about seventy-five thousand dollars and I haven't been able to reduce that. Last year I reduced it some, but then I had another load of newsprint coming in. Right now, it's kind of break-even."

Gross income at the *Free Press* has fallen from around \$240,000 at the beginning of the decade to about \$210,000 last year — a drop of more than one-third when inflation is factored in. In an ideal world, his son Kenneth, who has expressed an interest in taking over the paper, would move back to Greenfield within the next few years so that Sidey could slowly retire, as his father did in the 1950s. But there isn't enough income now for two families. "Actually, last year, my income boiled down to about twenty thousand dollars. But seven thousand of that I had to use to pay off debt.

"So what I had left to live on," he says with a rueful smile, "was about thirteen thousand, which is considered by federal standards to be poverty level, or close to it. And we've been in that shape for about four years."

On the positive side, Sidey has replaced his old prototype equipment with a new Apple Macintosh computer system, which he figures will save \$300 a month in processing costs alone. The Apple system was a surprise gift from his younger brother, Hugh, who has been writing a column on the presidency since the Johnson administration, first for *Life* magazine and now for *Time*. The two were always close — roommates in college and again when both worked for the *Omaha World-Herald*, before Ed went back home and Hugh went on to the big time. Hugh Sidey has kept one eye on the rural crisis, however. "Something terribly

important in American history is happening," he wrote in his column last year, "and nobody knows how it is going to come out."

It has mostly been up to the big media to analyze America's rural woes. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, has explained the changes that led to the world's food glut; *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has run thoughtful coverage of the grass-roots efforts to shape federal farm policy; a series in *The Kansas City Times* last year explained how the rural crisis is rooted not just in farming but in manufacturing and mining and even in the fishing industry. *The Dallas Morning News*, in an essay in a long series, tried to untangle two perspectives on farming — the romantic view of an honest and moral way of life, now threatened, and the harder business view of just another industry with an oversupply problem, like semiconductors and steel.

Smaller papers in farm communities, meanwhile, tend to cover the trees, not the forest. And in hard-hit areas they have a unique dilemma: how to play the relentless bad news. William and Judith Heffernan, rural sociologists at the University of Missouri, studied a troubled agricultural community in depth two years ago and found that nearly every threatened farm family they interviewed showed standard clinical signs of mental depression. All the troubled families together, William Heffernan says, had infected their community with a sort of "collective depression."

"That's an attitude," he says. "Nobody is in a more powerful position to do something about that than the newspaper people. For a community to turn around, you've got to have hope. If you keep talking too long about the problems, everybody gets more depressed. On the other hand, if you are too upbeat, people think you don't understand, and you lose your credibility. It's a fine, fine line."

It's a line that Sidey walks; as the farm crisis grinds on, he tries to accentuate the positive while still reporting the dismal news. "It's certainly not that when you've got a bad-news story one week I go out and try to find something on the other side on purpose," he says. "It's kind of a gut feeling in the way I play stories. We've always tried to play up the more positive things. We give a lot more space proportionately to things like the Cub Scouts than we do to the kid that gets in trouble. I've always felt that a newspaper can set a climate of expectations."

In the beginning, Sidey's farm-crisis coverage included plenty of meetings of angry and dispirited farmers — organizing efforts, seminars, and the like — but those have tapered off now. Farmers have emotionally adjusted to the crisis, Sidey says — "the folks have finally realized it's not something they did wrong" — and his agricultural coverage is fairly routine again. He never was one for covering the human drama anyway — the family losing its farm, the tears and the rage. "I know these people," he says. "That would be like breaking into the house of a friend to take a picture of his grief at a death. I don't do that."

Part of this is just the nature of weekly journalism in a small community. Sidey does not see his role as that of the detached and hard-nosed observer, and neither does anyone else, for that matter. In the middle of a city council meeting

that he had invited me to, as the assembled group discussed how to build support for the idea of a community center, a burly farmer turned toward Sidey and asked, "What do you think, Ed?" Sidey put down his notebook for a moment to give his well-reasoned answer. Later he explained: "I don't go there with the idea of being a participant in the discussion, but it always happens that I am, because the newspaper is a vital cog in all of these projects. So the pure journalist from the big-city paper would be horrified, you know, at the publisher and editor sitting in there telling them what they ought to do for a campaign. Some newspapers I know won't even let their people serve on school boards and city councils and this sort of thing because it's a conflict of interest. That doesn't hold true in most communities our size."

Small-town editors are often tied in with the business community and city government. Sidey, in fact, is on the local bank board, he's chairman of the planning-and-zoning commission, and he served on the school board for twelve years, until his oldest son graduated in 1978. Only the bank position has given him second thoughts; he finally decided that he was there to moderate the bank's outside ownership, to give it the borrower's perspective, and so he stayed on.

Spreading the news: Each Wednesday, after the press run, Sidey delivers his paper to nearby businesses and towns.



CAROLE GEORGE CEOLLA/BLACK STAR

He finds what he calls "community building" one of the more satisfying parts of his job.

These days it's more community re-building. The big story in the *Free Press* now is the "Regeneration Connection," an organization forged to inject some confidence and spirit into Adair County. It was born and named at a big meeting in a Greenfield church last February, when representatives of more than forty community organizations got the ball rolling by compiling a list of 110 "good things" about Greenfield and Adair County. These ranged from "very friendly, helpful people" to "site of Jesse James robbery" to "nice funeral home." Sidey printed the entire list, in an issue that also included a small front-page story about the sighting of the year's first robin.

Next, the Regeneration Connection embarked on a number of projects. The biggest is the county community center, which civic leaders are trying to figure out how to fund. Meanwhile, the bank agreed to give low-interest loans for storefront restoration on the square. Among the projects already completed is a "People Pages" booklet — a listing of services and home-grown products available in the community, from live bait to vinyl repair. Most of the ideas involve little or no cost — marigold-planting around town, for example, and a series of club-sponsored ice-cream socials, concerts, and the like, on Thursday nights in the town square. Sidey puts all these things on page one.

Similar bootstrap projects have popped up in a number of farm communities. The University of Missouri's Heffernan points to Mount Ayr, a few miles south of Greenfield. The town was so shocked by a *U.S. News & World Report* story about its woes a couple of years ago that it started a project similar to the Regeneration Connection. The townspeople corrected some of the blemishes that the magazine had pointed out, Heffernan says, such as peeling paint on the courthouse, and went on to more ambitious projects. Several months later, a small factory chose to locate in Mount Ayr, perhaps attracted by the show of civic spirit. "Economic development followed the psychological turnaround," Heffernan notes.

Psychological uplifts, of course, eventually need something solid underneath to keep them aloft. This summer it seems as if the whole state of Iowa is debating whether such supports are forming under the farm economy. It's a debate over real economic trends, although in some ways it feels like a debate between those who would accentuate the positives and those who think it is important to face the negatives. Republican Governor Terry E. Branstad is among those celebrating signs of a turnaround; Democratic Senator Tom Harkin acknowledges a few improving indicators, but says they are only the artificial result of massive federal subsidies, that the underlying problem, overproduction, remains in place. As next February's Iowa caucuses approach, the debate is becoming increasingly political, with Republicans tending to defend administration farm policy and Democrats attacking it. (No one seems to really want to continue the current level of subsidies, however, which, according to Harkin's office, now supplies about fifty cents of every dollar of farmers' income; last

year the program cost the treasury \$26 billion.)

The press is in on the act. *The New York Times*, citing anecdotal evidence, reported on May 1 that the long slide in farmland values appeared to be ending, that land prices were even rising in some places, reflecting a "new optimism" about the farm economy. James P. Gannon, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, noted in his Sunday column two days later that Iowa bank profits were rising, that hog prices were way up, and that, despite "all the chronic bitch-

Sidey feels the Register understands something that much of the press does not — the threat the farm crisis poses to the small rural towns

ing about the government's farm program," it had pumped almost \$1 billion into Iowa farmers' pockets in 1986, more than farmers got in any other state.

On the other side, Prairiefire, a well-respected farmer-advocate organization based in Des Moines, argues that the scenario of an economic turnaround is being painted by some of the same groups that contended as late as 1985 that there was no farm crisis. Land values in Iowa and four other midwestern states did rise .4 percent in the first quarter of 1987, the group concedes, but the group also quotes the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, which came up with that statistic: "... market conditions would not seem to warrant expectations for a pronounced upturn in land prices." Using "conservative" Department of Agriculture figures, Prairiefire notes that, nationwide, one farm went out of business every ten minutes in 1985, and that that rate increased to one every seven minutes last year. Prairiefire further notes that there never was a crisis for the top third of the nation's farmers, that the hardest hit is the full-time family farm, and that the crisis is accelerating a concentration of land ownership, as lenders, management companies, and wealthy farmers take over bankrupt operations.

Some reporters have been slow to write the "new optimism" story. "My sense is that there's a plateau here; whether it's bottoming out is hard to judge," says Larry Green, Midwest bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times*. "It's too early to tell." Don Muhm, farm editor of *The Des Moines Register* since 1960 and considered by many to be the dean of agricultural reporters, is cautious. "People want to hear happy news. They all want to know that it's better ahead," he says. "We all hope so. Many think so, including my editor. We won't know for sure for eighteen months or so, if we can look back and say, 'By gosh, that was the bottom.' "

For his part, Sidey might play the ice-cream social on the square more prominently than the family bankruptcy down the road, but when it comes to the state of the farm economy, the lifeblood of his town and his newspaper, he plays it very straight. In his most recent agriculture editorial,

headlined THE FARM SCENE IS NOT THAT BRIGHT, he wrote that "to accent the positive too much now will be just as harmful as the overkill we got from the networks on the negative side. . . . The fact is, many folks on the farm and in the small towns are still walking a financial tightrope in 1987. Things haven't gotten worse lately, but they haven't gotten a whole lot better either.

"One slip, such as a bad crop year, or rising interest rates, will bring down more families," he wrote. "Neither optimism nor pessimism, but caution, ought to be the word on the farm this summer."

Sidey does not give the nation's press very high marks in covering agriculture in the 1980s. Even the *Register*, which he rates number one in farm coverage, "seemed to be slow to recognize the situation to start with, then they went gung-ho, and now they're back in happyland. I think we need a little moderation at both ends."

Still, he feels that the *Register* understands something that much of the press does not — the threat to the small rural towns. Aside from the direct financial problems, many of these towns are being robbed of their young people. It is the young farmers who have the most debt. Older farmers and businessmen feel they can't pass on their operations to their children. And the young see little opportunity. When Greenfield High School signed up only twenty students for vocational agriculture courses last semester, for example, the school board cut the teacher back almost to half time. Then the teacher quit, heading for Boston, where his son thought he could help him get a job in financial services.

Such losses are cumulative, Sidey notes. Each business

gone means a weaker chamber of commerce, each family gone a diminished church enrollment, and so forth. "I don't think Greenfield will become a ghost town, because we're doing something about it," he says. "And yet it's very scary."

Over dinner at the Sideys — Iowa beef, naturally — there is talk about how life in farm country is not altogether idyllic. Linda Sidey, who grew up on a farm, tells of her hatred for chickens, which she says are so stupid they sometimes open their mouths in a rainstorm and drown. She works with her husband at the *Free Press*, and she tells of getting dizzy earlier in the day trying to photograph the company name on a cement truck as the name rolled around and around on the truck's mixing barrel. The company was donating cement to a town project and wanted some credit. A big part of small-town journalism, her husband explains, is "stroking egos"; another part is listing names, down to every last cousin at the family reunion and "who carried the flowers" at the wedding.

Still, he says, "It's really very satisfying. And the rewards of small-town life are very real."

On my way back to the motel, I can see what Sidey means. Greenfield looks good. Children ride bikes in the street while their parents watch them from lawn chairs and front-porch swings. The high school band is practicing for the Fourth of July. It all looks like one of those "Morning in America" commercials from the 1984 presidential campaign, except that it is early in the evening and the shadows are getting long. ■



Election coverage, British style

by ROBERT YOAKUM

"I have been most impressed with the intense press coverage of the election. The British newspapers cover all the issues so thoroughly, much more thoroughly than in the U.S. The points of view of all the parties are given space. In the U.S. we concentrate on the personalities involved more than the issues."

Richard Nixon at Heathrow Airport.
From photo caption in *The Independent*,
May 27, 1987.

Nixon's praise may have pleased British editors, but it's unlikely that they believed him. It's unlikely, as a matter of fact, that anyone in the entire United Kingdom would agree with any part of the Nixon statement, except that election coverage was, indeed, "intense." News coverage was "thorough" in only two or three national papers (out of twenty-two); it was seldom as thorough as that provided by major American papers; it was usually angled in favor of publishers' political prejudices; it was hopelessly contaminated with opinion; and it was deeply concerned with personalities.

Many commentators, of various political hues, agreed with Edward Heath, the former Conservative prime minister, who said, three days after Nixon passed through, "From the point of view of personalities and the press, this is by far the filthiest campaign I have ever known — absolutely pernicious. The press indulging in personalities and private lives, which hasn't occurred before. This, I think, is deplorable."

And what about Nixon's opinion that "The points of view of all the parties are given space"? That was generally true of the "quality" papers, as they are called by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, but their combined circulation is only 2.6 million, as opposed to 12.2 million for the tabloid "popular" papers. And what a *Sunday Times* columnist wrote about political balance in three of

those pop tabs would apply to most: "The *Mail*, *Express*, and *Sun* are working single-mindedly to reelect the Tories. Every headline, every comment, and most front pages are devoted to showing up the weakness of Labour." (The only leftist mass-circulation tabloid, the *Mirror*, was as committed to the Labour party as the *Mail*, the *Express*, and *The Sun* were to the Tories. And the *Mirror* was equally willing to use its news columns to proselytize.)

Fleet Street is overwhelmingly pro-Tory. As columnist Dennis Kavanagh pointed out in *The Times*, "Between 1945 and 1970, the circulation of Labour-supporting newspapers was not far short of that for Conservative papers." But today, he added, "three-quarters of voters read a newspaper which is rooting for the Conservative victory." This strong pro-Tory tilt makes a difference because "the press remains important . . . in setting the agenda. . . . If Labour is to set the agenda, it will have to do it in spite of much of the press."

During the campaign the question as to which tabloid was most slavishly pro-Tory was debated in columns about press coverage. It was a tough call, but for my money Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* — one of five Murdoch papers, whose circulations total 11 million — was the winner, if only by a nose.

Indeed, if *The Sun* (circulation: 4 million) would win no awards for fairness or accuracy, it might win one for ingenuity. It was child's play for a *Sun* editor to link Labour to gays, lesbians, the "looney Left," union goons, and male prostitutes, known as "rent-boys." (LABOUR PICKS A RENT-BOY AS SCHOOL BOSS read the headline of a story that self-destructed a couple of days later without that fact being reported in *The Sun*.) But how does even the most inventive editor tie Josef Stalin to Labour in 1987? Well, by employing a spiritualist who, by interviewing famous ghosts, could report on June 1 that Thatcher-backers included Henry VIII, Lord Nelson, Winston

Churchill, and Boadicea, queen of the Britons, who, to quote a *Financial Times* piece twitting *The Sun*, "took Colchester by a landslide in A.D. 60 and put to death 70,000 members of the opposition." Stalin, the medium said, was a supporter of Labour's leader, Neil Kinnock. The story appeared under a headline that read: WHY I'M BACKING KINNOCK, BY STALIN.

The next day — June 2 — *The Sun's* Page Three, normally reserved for photos of topless models, carried this caption under PARTY GIRLS: "True blue beauty Maria Whittaker has picked the candidate who gets her vote. The man who sets her lustful on the hustings is tasty Tory Greg Knight. Bachelor Greg, 38 . . . is also a solicitor. And our Maria, 18, says he can handle her briefs anytime!"

Perhaps no political ploy had greater impact on *Sun* readers — who, by one calculation, include one out of every four voting-age Britons — than the nudeless Page Three that greeted them three days later. A small box in the middle of that depressing white expanse explained: "This is what Page Three of *The Sun* — the most famous newspaper page in the world — will look like if Labour gets into power on June 11. Clare Short, feminist and Labour Front Bench spokesman, has already made two attempts to have Page Three banned. If Labour are elected, she will make sure her plans succeed." (The next day's *Sun* announced PAGE THREE IS BACK, and provided two G-stringed models to compensate deprived customers.)

On May 29 *The Sun* clarified the consequences of Kinnock's no-nukes-for-Britain policy: page one was dominated by the drawing of a Russian soldier, one foot on a prostrate slingshot-wielding Kinnock (at whose head the grinning soldier is aiming an H-bomb missile), and the headline: WHEN THE RED ROSE TURNS YELLOW.

Historians will be forced to examine a minor incident that occurred in a TV

Robert Yoakum, who lives in Lakeville, Connecticut, is a longtime observer of the British press.



studio on June 9 to understand the story that took over Britain's largest-circulation newspapers on the eve of what everyone agreed was a crucial election. That day's *Sun* printed an "election exclusive" — which it had actually run two years earlier — charging that the wife of Denis Healey, Labour's shadow foreign minister, had gone to a private hospital, not the National Health Service, for a hip replacement operation. Healey, confronted on the interview show with *The Sun's* page-one blast, said he was the victim of a "dirty trick" ("You brought me in here to talk about the [Venice] summit and you decided to talk about my wife"). During a commercial break he called the pregnant female interviewer, Anne Diamond, "a shit" for, among other things, refusing to say in which medical system she planned to have her baby. Diamond said she wasn't a public figure; Healey replied that neither was his wife. Healey then stalked out, pushing the show's producer en route.

On election eve the tabs were either hysterically rehashing the two-year-old story (HEALEY THE HYPOCRITE — the *Express*) or chortling over the putative political consequences (HEALEY'S GIFT TO THE TORIES — *Daily Mail*) or shedding crocodile tears for Ms. Diamond (DENIS BLASTS TV GIRL — PUNCH THROWN AFTER FOUR-LETTER BLITZ ON PREGNANT NEWSGIRL — *The Sun*) or, on page four of Labour's lonely voice, the *Mirror*, defending the former chancellor of the exchequer (ANGRY HEALEY SAVAGES DIRTY TRICKS DIAMOND).

Not many people would have faulted *The Sun* for dereliction of duty to the Conservative cause, but, according to Francis Wheen's "Diary" column in *The Independent*, the hands-on publisher did: Murdoch was upset by a poll showing the Tory lead down to 4 percent. "On the evening after the poll appeared, *The Sun's* editor, Kelvin Mackenzie, took a rest from electioneering by escorting his family to the pictures. But not for long: a message was flashed into the cinema asking Mackenzie to come to the foyer. There was a call for him from a Mr. Rupert Murdoch in New York.

"Murdoch was in a fury. Why was this happening to his beloved Maggie? And what did Kelvin propose to do about

it? Kelvin's protestations that he wasn't responsible for opinion polls in *The Daily Telegraph* fell on deaf ears. He was left with a simple message from his boss: shape up, drongo.

"The next day Kelvin set to work with a will, dreaming up bigger and better propaganda stunts. And on Monday the result of Rupert's phone call was there for all to see."

The result was a June 8 story that began with a page-one headline, LABOUR WINS!, and continued for five pages inside outlining the horrors awaiting the nation if leftists should prevail. (For *Sun* readers who may still have been stunned at the prospect of a world without Page Three girls, the paper printed a reassuring subhead saying, "Wake up folks, this is just a nightmare.") "Life under the socialist jackboot" included the scrapping of Polaris submarines ("14 days that will leave us helpless"), political tampering with the education system ("How school head was sacked by Looney left"), and a deteriorating economy ("How Labour would steal the pound in your pocket").

An equally nightmarish, but non-fictional, view of the nation had been presented over ten pages in the June 1 *Daily Mirror*, Britain's second largest daily, with a circulation of over 3 million, only this frightening picture was of present-day Britain — a DIVIDED BRITAIN, according to the page-one headline, beneath which appeared a photograph of two tots holding hands in a rubble-strewn world of row houses. In the lower corner of the page was the grim face of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the caption: "She doesn't care for them. DO YOU?"

Inside pages, like those of most of the *Mirror's* campaign editions, were filled with emotive photos and prose depicting poverty, unemployment, despair, discrimination, breadlines, battered children, violent crime, collapsing families, and declining health. A huge headline on pages 10 and 11 summed it up: PAIN AND PRIVILEGE.

If the June 1 *Mirror* wanted readers to feel the pain, the paper's June 8 edition was designed to make them loathe the privileged: SHOCK REPORT REVEALS GROTESQUE LIFE UNDER THATCHER. As Steven Erlanger of *The Boston Globe*

said on a post-election TV program: "Appealing to that fine democratic instinct, class hatred, the *Mirror* followed a powerful, if familiar, line: 'Heartless Margaret Thatcher has divided Britain more than any prime minister before her. . . . The rich are guzzling champagne at a record rate.'" (Champagne sales had soared 72 percent since 1979; Porsche sales were up 95 percent.)

The *Mirror* was horrified by "life in the fast lane" — the "Yuppie rich . . . burning it up and boozing on the bubbly." A fellow called "Fast Eddie" Davenport was profiled: "Eddie organizes balls where, for the privilege of paying 14 pounds or more each, young teenagers from private schools and 'good' backgrounds can dress up in ball-gowns and dinner suits, grope each other and collapse in a drunken heap." These degraded Tory toffs also indulge in NON-STOP SNOGGING, according to a line above a photo showing a heap of boozy kids smooching.

"The *Mirror* had a serious point," Erlanger said, with its statistics proving that the rich had gotten richer and the poor poorer. "Unfortunately, it was lost in the populist rubbish."

The *Mirror* is owned by Robert Maxwell's Mirror Group, which prints three papers with a total circulation of 9 million. The other two are Sunday papers, *The People* and the *Sunday Mirror*. (A fourth Maxwell entry, the *London Daily News*, folded in July.)

In one sense Maxwell's papers are indistinguishable: editors are free to give a pro-Labour spin to any story. But in *The People*, as in Murdoch's Sunday *News of the World*, one senses a greater editorial concern over keeping the public informed about Princess Di's doings, the nasty Beasties, TV and movie stars, new diets, and kinky top-drawer sex scandals. Now and then *The People* gets the best of both worlds, as when, on May 24, it printed a story headlined: DISGRACE OF MP WHO LIED AND LIED. Charged by the paper with spanking rent-boys in his flat, and confronted with photos, any other man "would have confessed there and then," the weekly declared. "But it wasn't in Proctor's nature to come clean. Like a rat trapped by his disgusting deeds he tried to dodge and weave at every turn . . . his cruel blue eyes blinded by the belief that he could

Some basic principles for foreign trade policy

Most Americans, and especially their elected officials, would tell anybody who asks that they favor free trade and deplore protectionism. Invariably, however, many of them add the word "but"—and all their caveats have cast the dark shadow of protectionism over the trade legislation now making its way through the Congress.

We can understand the appeal of the protectionists' siren song. Many American industries are beset by foreign competition, and our trade deficits are huge. But most economists agree that many of our problems are self-inflicted: America's huge budget deficit gave rise to high real interest rates, an overstrong dollar, and the consequent trade imbalance. The fact is, with today's dollar at a more realistic level, American products are becoming increasingly competitive in domestic and world markets alike. The problems are lessening.

But it takes time for large imbalances to disappear, and the caveats against free trade continue to be heard. Because trade is so vital to the economic well-being of America and the world alike, these caveats are worth examining. And on close scrutiny, in our view, they only serve to reinforce a set of principles that have long served as the basis for sound trade policy. Here's what we mean:

- "*I'm for free trade, but a lot of countries are pushing America around.*" Actually, whether one is being pushed or doing the pushing depends on perspective. And rules do exist under which America and its trading partners have long conducted their commerce, and can settle their disputes. The rules are spelled out in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), to which the U.S. is a signator, and which for 40 years has kept a lid on the trade wars which raged before its creation. Even now, a new round of negotiations is under way to broaden and improve GATT. The principle underlying GATT: There are specific, internationally accepted rules governing trade, and enforcement procedures are already in place to protect all the players.

- "...but our trade deficit with Japan (or Taiwan or any country that's the whipping boy of the moment) is simply too high." The fact is, trade is multinational and involves all industries. The balance of accounts with any single nation tells only part of the story, and only at a given moment in time. Japan buys more from America than any country except Canada, despite our trade deficit

with that country. The U.S. continues to run aggregate trade surpluses in agriculture, aircraft, control instruments, plastics, and synthetic resins and rubber. Furthermore, investment balances are another part of the total picture. While at the moment the world sells more in the U.S. than it buys, foreigners invest more here than Americans do abroad—and foreign capital has been crucial in funding America's budget deficit. The principles to remember: Trade is a complex process that cannot be defined by any single measurement. And trade should never be used as a whip, or to gain political advantage. Should the U.S. politicize trade, we would be punishing the very nations that are our political allies, and we would make it much more difficult to retain our leadership role in the free world.

- "...but imports are costing the U.S. jobs." Are they? Since 1981, imports to the U.S. have risen by more than 40 percent, while America has created almost 11 million new jobs. During that time, unemployment in the U.S. has fallen—and risen sharply in Japan and Europe. Besides, some 5.5 million American jobs are linked to exports—every \$1 billion of exports supports more than 25,000 U.S. jobs. Think of the loss of these jobs, should America's trading partners retaliate against protectionist steps taken here. And one should never forget that U.S. consumers pay higher prices for protected goods. The principle at work: In the long run, protectionism costs more jobs than it saves, and it also distorts the economy by harboring inefficiencies and obsolescence.

Cordell Hull, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's secretary of state and the architect of Roosevelt's reciprocal trade agreements that helped pull America out of the Great Depression, once said: "Enduring peace and the welfare of nations are indissolubly connected with friendliness, fairness, equality and the maximum practicable degree of freedom in international trade." That's the basis of another trade principle: Never enact any trade measure you wouldn't like to see another country aim at you.

If our last principle seems classically simple and more than slightly familiar, well, nobody ever said the Golden Rule requires footnotes. Along with our other principles, we offer it as a basis of discussion—and a compass point to guide the nation through its current search for an effective trade policy.



get away with it. After all, he was a darling of the Tory right wing with a fat majority and friends in high places."

The page-one story in that issue had to do with a TV series: STREET STAR'S LOVE SHOCK. But the next Sunday's front page warned: WATCH OUT! MAGGIE'S SNOOPS ABOUT! Inside, Thatcher was referred to as a "dictator" and the leader of a gang of MP's that had "cheats and perverts" in its ranks.

A *Financial Times* columnist, reviewing the week ending June 6, wrote: "Beneath the humor, the real theme of the week for much of the press was fear, and how to whip it up." The *Express* (circulation: 1.7 million) did its bit with heads like OUR CONSPIRACY, BY RED KEN, which was not, as a casual reader might have thought, an exclusive by Ken Livingstone, far-left head of the London County Council, but a speech in which Livingstone bragged that Labour was about to elect "the most radical bunch of MPs in the party's history." The word "conspiracy," however, appeared nowhere in the story. Credit the *Express*, though, for occasionally running a small notice — "Express Opinion" — beneath a huge headline. Page-one heads, however, that failed to carry such a notice included LABOUR'S BULLIES STRIKE TERROR, MAGGIE'S BULLDOG ECONOMY, CRAZY COST OF LABOUR'S JOBS, and KINNOCK'S TAX THREAT TO 12 MILLION.

The *Daily Express*, like the *Sunday Express* and *The Star*, is owned by United Newspapers — a company controlled by David Stevens, who was knighted this year at Thatcher's recommendation. *The Star* (circulation: 1.3 million) used its inside news columns to push for Thatcher, but its front page was seldom diverted by a mere election from heads like: I WANT YOUR SEX — OUTRAGE OVER GEORGE'S NEW RECORD, RAPE TRAP GIRL, and, for foreign news, BRUCE'S WILD BASH ENDS IN JAIL.

The daily and Sunday *Telegraphs*, bought in 1985 by Conrad Black, a conservative Canadian businessman, provided detailed coverage of the campaign that was admirably balanced in comparison with the tabloids, but one could see why the paper has long been called The Daily Torygraph: The story below the headline GUERRILLA WAR A DETERRENT, SAYS KINNOCK didn't record the Labour leader as saying it.

The *Telegraph* spilled over with good news about the economy. In one week I saw these page-one stories: JOBLESS TIDE HAS TURNED, SAY FIRMS; TORIES GIVEN TRADE BOOST; BUSINESS ORDERS 'BEST FOR 10 YEARS'; and BANK RESERVES HIT RECORD HIGH. That BEST FOR 10 YEARS piece, based on a report by the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) — and also carried on page one in *The Times* — was relegated to the business section of *The Independent*, which, the following day, printed a CBI admission that the report was "misleading." The day after that the paper followed up by reporting other questions raised about the CBI claim. But back on the Torygraph all was quiet. No similar stories disturbed the flow of economic optimism — either in the *Telegraph* or *The Times*.

When Rupert Murdoch bought *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* early in 1981 he vowed to expand their readership beyond the legendary audience of bishops and professors. Once called "The Thunderer," *The Times* no longer rates such a prestigious moniker. Circulation is now 450,000, up by more than 150,000. Were there a computer that could measure such things, it might show, as has been the case with many other Murdoch publications, that circulation has increased in inverse proportion to quality. Election coverage reflected Murdoch's pro-Tory bias in much the same way *The Daily Telegraph* reflected Black's pro-Tory leanings. In one sensitive area, however — writing about election press coverage, which involved saying uncomplimentary things about *The Sun*'s excesses — *The Times*'s and *The Sunday Times*'s columnists were nearly as critical as those of *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. (It struck me that *The Sunday Times* — circulation 1.2 million — was a more literate and reliable source of political information than its smaller sister.)

The only tabloid to back the Alliance — an uneasy marriage of Liberals and Social Democrats that made a failed run for parliamentary power — was *Today*, the first of several recent titles produced, belatedly, with the aid of new technology. It was not difficult, in the paper's news columns, to discern which way *To-*

day's owners intended to vote. Such melding of news and opinion won't change under Rupert Murdoch, who bought the paper shortly after the election, but the political beneficiaries almost certainly will.

Two of the Labour-bashing mass circulation tabs, the *Daily Mail* and *The Mail on Sunday*, are published by Lord Rothermere's Associated Newspapers, which also produces the less steamy *London Evening Standard*. (Less steamy now, but with Murdoch in the wings, the *Standard*, too, may join the speleological search for even deeper-down-market customers.) These page-one headlines, appearing above partisan news stories, give us the flavor of the two *Mails*: THE TYRANTS ARE WAITING, THE ICEBERG MANIFESTO (the hidden agenda of Labour's hard left), and DON'T THROW IT ALL AWAY! A small box, "Daily Mail page one comment," appears beneath heads like NO QUESTIONS PLEASE — I'M KINNOCK. The *Mails*, incidentally, refer to Margaret Thatcher as "Mother Britain."

Two old and widely respected papers, the *Observer* and *The Guardian*, covered the elections in their inimitable way, which is to say with page after page of signed feature pieces, many of which were well-written and amusing. For the most part, the writers' sympathies were clear.

But for straight news one looked to the *Financial Times* and *The Independent*. The pink-sheeted but pro-Tory *Financial Times* is 101 years old; the latter less than a year. A daring *Daily Telegraph* editor, Andreas Whittam Smith, quit his job to enter the lists against his former employer and *The Times*. With an up-market circulation of nearly 300,000, Smith's *Independent* may — with an infusion of crucial classified ads — make a profit, in which case the newspaper landscape in London will look somewhat less bleak. *The Independent*, incidentally, backed no one.

Many Americans resent our year-or-two-long political campaigns and some cite three-week elections in Britain as a system to be emulated. If Americans had to put up with the kind of political coverage imposed on Britons, the British time limit would probably be mandated here by law. No one could stand anything longer. ■

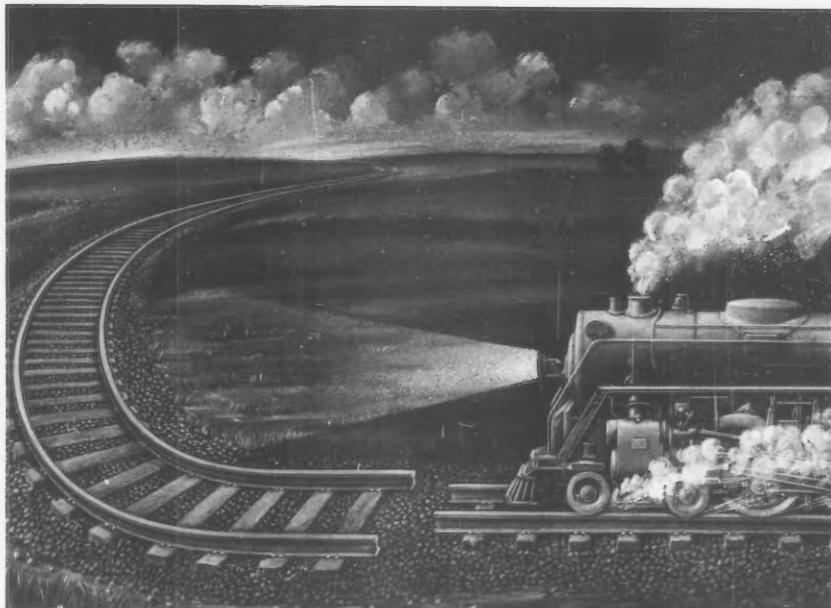
Issues of the Information Age:

The way beyond Babel.

Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the *de facto* standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

The solution, as we see it, is common standards which would allow electronic systems in one or many locations to work together. People will be informed and in control, while the systems exchange,



process, and act on information automatically.

AT&T is working with national, international, and industry-wide organizations to set up comprehensive, international standards to be shared by everyone who uses and provides information technology. We think it's time for everyone in our industry to commit to developing firm, far-reaching standards. The goal: to provide our customers with maximum flexibility and utility. Then, they can decide how and with whom to work.

We foresee a time when the promise of the Information Age will be realized. People will participate in a worldwide Telecommunity through a vast, global network of networks, the merging of communications and computers. They'll be able to handle

information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they make a phone call today.

The science is here now. The technology is coming along rapidly. But only with compatibility will the barriers to Telecommunity recede.

**Telecommunity is our goal.
Technology is our means.**

We're committed to leading the way.



Eye in the sky

Photos from a media satellite would be very revealing.
Will the government let it fly?

by JAY PETERZELL

If you close your eyes you can almost see the headlines:

NEWS SATELLITE SHOWS SOVIET TREATY VIOLATION; OR
EYE IN SKY DISPUTES U.S. CLAIM ON NICARAGUA; OR
SOUTH AFRICAN MASSACRE SHOWN BY MEDIA SATELLITE; OR
TROOPS SEEN MASSING ON SINO-SOVIET BORDER . . .

Until recently, high-resolution satellite photography has been largely the exclusive possession of American and Soviet intelligence agencies, which have used it since the early 1960s to gather vital information on nuclear weapons and other military matters. But the day when the news media can use the same kind of imagery to cover events in previously forbidden parts of the world, or to check independently on once uncheckable claims made by government, is sneaking up fast on the press.

In fact, it may already have arrived. In the past year, a number of network news programs, daily newspapers, and specialized publications like *Aviation Week & Space Technology* have used pictures taken by the American LANDSAT system and the French SPOT satellite to illustrate stories about Chernobyl, the Soviet space shuttle, Iranian missile deployment, and other issues. Although LANDSAT and SPOT photos have relatively low resolution (see sidebar), their increasing appearance in the media has sparked interest in the possibility of using even better satellite pictures to give viewers a close look at once-hidden territory. "The technology is available for the media to acquire high-resolution, near real-time imagery," a Department of Defense expert says. "All it takes is money. Lots of money."

Jay Peterzell, a frequent contributor to the Review, covers national security issues from Washington.

Money, that is — and permission from the secretary of commerce.

The Constitution, of course, prohibits Congress from enacting laws restricting freedom of the press. In 1984, however, Congress did just that by passing the Land Remote-Sensing Commercialization Act. The law, which transferred the government's low-resolution civilian satellite LANDSAT to the private sector, also set up a licensing scheme for future private "remote-sensing" satellites. From a First Amendment point of view, that scheme is bizarre.

The Landsat Act, as it is known, says that no one under U.S. jurisdiction may operate a photographic satellite without a license from the secretary of commerce. To obtain a license, an applicant must agree to operate the system in a manner designed to "preserve and promote the national security" — which is a reasonable requirement but one not normally imposed on the press. The secretary of defense and the secretary of state are authorized to set conditions for complying with U.S. national security requirements and foreign policy concerns. The secretary of commerce may revoke a license in mid-orbit if an operator does not comply with "any . . . national security concerns of the United States," and may seize any image that is "likely" to be used in violation of a license.

What makes enactment of this scheme a little less incomprehensible is the fact that it was never specifically intended to apply to the press. Congressional and government attorneys who drafted the 1984 law uniformly report that the idea of media use of satellites never occurred to them. "We never looked at it in those terms," one congressional official says. "The whole First Amendment thing is an afterthought. We smacked our heads and realized we'd left something out."

But the law is on the books — and its

effect on future use of space photography by the media is still far from clear. "The law is worded so vaguely that a constitutional challenge would be likely to succeed," comments Rita Ann Reimer, a constitutional scholar who analyzed the issue in a paper presented last December at a conference sponsored by the Office of Technology Assessment. Reimer notes, however, that the Supreme Court's decision on the matter would depend in part on whether government restrictions on a media satellite were considered a prior restraint on publication — in which case they would have to meet the *Pentagon Papers* standard and be necessary in order to prevent "direct, immediate, irreparable" harm — or merely a restraint on newsgathering. The Supreme Court has never decided how much protection newsgathering is entitled to, and there are no precedents at all in the national security context.

The fight to ensure that high-resolution space photography is not put off limits to the media has largely been led by Mark Brender, an assignment editor at ABC News who chairs the Media in Space committee of the Radio-Television News Directors Association. Brender and RTNDA attorney Robert Aamoth have been pushing the Department of Commerce for over a year to spell out the national security criteria it

How well do satellites see?

The visual acuity of a satellite is measured by the smallest object that can be individually distinguished. If two objects, each of which is a meter long and a meter wide, are placed at least a meter apart, a photograph with one-meter resolution will show that there are two objects rather than one — although a viewer will not be able to see what they are. The resolution of LANDSAT images is about thirty meters. The resolution of SPOT photos is ten meters — about half the size of a tennis court. Resolution of one meter would allow a viewer to see vehicles, and possibly to detect the difference between a car and a pickup truck. U.S. and Soviet spy satellites are capable of producing images with a resolution of six inches or less.

will use in deciding whether to approve private reconnaissance satellites. Commerce has in turn been pushing the Pentagon and the State Department to provide language setting out the government's security and foreign policy concerns. But these two bigger, burler agencies have pushed back, repeatedly refusing to limit their flexibility by going beyond the language of the law itself. The Commerce Department recently issued final rules on licensing. They contain no guidelines specifying what resolution will be allowed.

This coyness has led Brender and others to fear that the administration will simply refuse to approve a high-resolution media satellite — or, indeed, any private satellite with better eyesight than SPOT. As evidence of this, they cite a classified 1978 presidential directive that reportedly limits private satellite systems to ten-meter resolution. Potential investors will be discouraged from proceeding with a media satellite so long as this limit exists, Brender believes.

"You can't have one of these systems

operating without gathering a lot of sensitive data," observes a former official who attended the OTA conference. "That's just a fact. At present, the government is trying to hold the line by refusing to license *any* useful system. That kind of takes care of it for a while. And they hope the problem will go away until the end of the century."

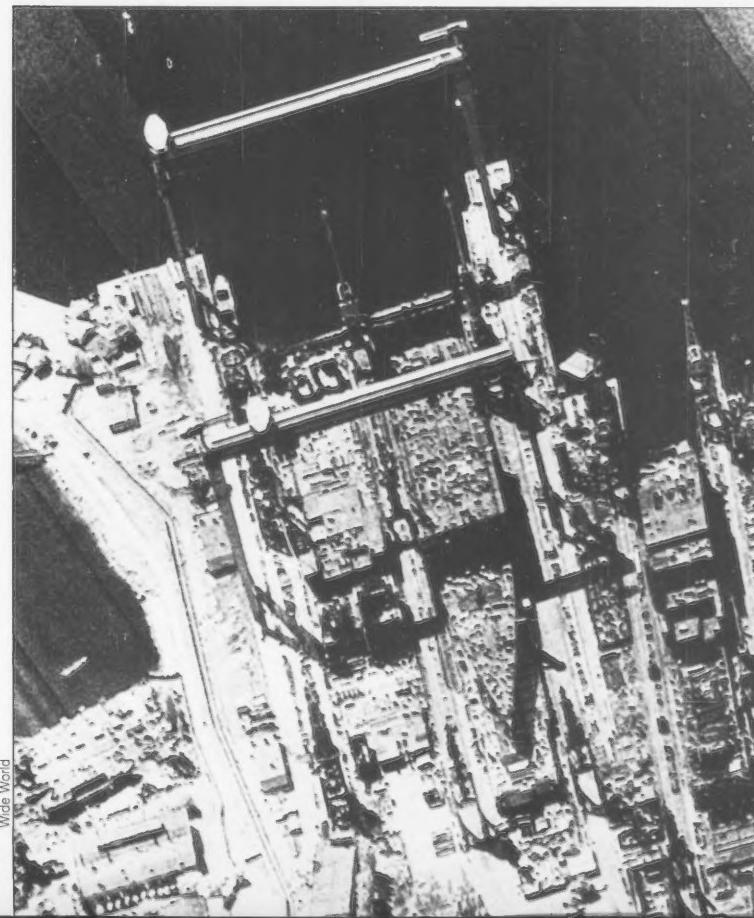
Since neither LANDSAT nor SPOT has any plans to equip its satellites with high-resolution cameras in the next decade, the problem may well go away — at least until some foreign company breaks the ten-meter barrier. This summer, however, the Soviets began selling space imagery abroad with a resolution as good as six meters. "We're in a holding action against technology," a Defense official admits. "We could never reasonably object to any resolution on a U.S. bird that was equal to or not as good as the resolution on a foreign bird. So when the Japanese have a six-inch resolution, we're going to have to say the game's up."

But will the government really try to

stall that long? A number of key officials interviewed recently at the Pentagon and the State Department painted a considerably more hopeful picture of the government's probable response to a proposal for a high-resolution media satellite. Although the officials declined to be identified, they said privately that the government is moving away from the idea of imposing blanket restrictions on resolution.

"We have to consider the sensitivities of our allies and would review applications on a case-by-case basis. But the question of resolution as such would not enter into it," says an authoritative State Department source. "A high-resolution satellite might raise national security concerns. But we would defer to the Department of Defense on that."

The best minds in the Pentagon aren't convinced of the need for a flat ban on such satellites either. "Nobody has said the secretary of defense is going to impose restrictions on resolution. That's what I read in the press, but I don't know if he will or not," a well-placed Defense



Wide World



EOSAT

Zooming in: The photo at left was taken by a KH-11 U.S. spy satellite; it shows in great detail the Soviets' first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier under construction (in two sections) at a Black Sea shipyard. Above: a LANDSAT photo of Manhattan, on which nothing much smaller than a ship's pier can be made out, even with a magnifying glass.

Department official says. "We've got to have a good, credible rationale that will stand the light of day."

"If you deny a license, you put the whole world off limits," another official observes. "The government is not going to be able to make a good case for sweeping restrictions on whole classes of information."

Rather than oiling up the blunderbuss of a flat ban, Pentagon officials say, they are attempting to zero in on methods of dealing with the problems that might be raised by a media satellite.

"The real risk is the loss of tactical surprise," says one government expert, citing the danger of premature disclosure of a U.S. military operation or a hostage-rescue attempt already under way. "That's where it impacts on national security. It's not a licensing problem, it's an operations problem. It's a matter of providing ways of reacting in emergency circumstances."

Such ways of reacting are not hard to devise. "We know where their satellite is," the expert said, and the Pentagon could ask a company operating a media satellite not to take photographs between time x and time y. Or, if the company had only one ground station receiving transmissions from space, a DOD representative could be present when sensitive military operations are taking place and could censor imagery as it comes in. Of course, actions like this may also raise serious First Amendment issues. But officials say that any decisions to restrict press coverage would probably require the approval of the secretary of defense and be limited to cases involving direct and immediate harm — in other words, something close to the *Pentagon Papers* standard.

At least, that's the kind of case the government would be likely to risk taking to court. A media satellite would also make it more difficult to protect secret weapons like the Stealth fighter plane from overhead snooping. "Operations security" matters of this kind have been examined by the National Operations Security Advisory Committee, an inter-agency NSC panel that includes the Defense Intelligence Agency, the CIA, and the State, Defense, and Justice departments. The committee planned to report to the secretary of defense by September on ways the government will be able to

track a media satellite and alert interested military commanders to when it will be flying overhead. For the purposes of this report, the panel assumed that there would be no restrictions on resolution.

"If there are now any limits on resolution in the government, they were established long before the idea of a media satellite came up," a Defense expert says. He adds that the best way to force the government to re-examine its policy and come up with definite answers is for the media to apply for a license.

No one has risen to this challenge. And the reason, some observers say, is that a media satellite is simply too expensive. "What would scare Brender and the other people running around on this issue most," says an aerospace consultant who follows the debate closely, "is if the government issued a statement saying they love the idea of a media satellite — go ahead."

Any way you slice it, a high-resolution satellite is expensive. A report released by the Office of Technology Assessment in May estimates that a two-satellite system with five-meter resolution would cost about \$500 million over five years to build and operate. Even if the major networks — NBC, CBS, ABC, and CNN — participated and showed one satellite image every night, each picture would have to be worth nearly \$70,000 to the media. "Given that the average network news story is produced for less than \$5,000," the report concludes, "it is hard to imagine how the networks could justify this additional expenditure."

The problem, in the view of a former government official who attended the OTA seminar, is that there is no "dominant need" for space imagery in the news business that outweighs the cost and other difficulties. For the government, satellite reconnaissance is the only way of gathering certain very important pieces of information — primarily about Soviet nuclear forces — "so," this former official says, "you do it despite the cost, and all sorts of other benefits are obtained as a side effect." A media satellite probably would not pay for itself if the payoff were measured solely by the number of pictures on the evening news. "It might pay for itself in terms

of improving the quality of the news," the former official says. "The question is, do you want very high-quality news, and is that worth the money?"

No one seems to know exactly how much money that is. The kind of system most useful to the media, with resolution of one meter or less, is said by the OTA's report to require "a multi-billion dollar investment." Experts have identified a number of factors that they say "drive the cost": the exponential increase in the number of separate bits of data in each picture as resolution improves, the need for more expensive ground stations capable of handling a higher data-transmission rate, the need for bigger computers to assemble the image, and the need for a more stable satellite "bus" than is required for low-resolution photography. It adds up pretty quickly, they say.

But all this seems to be based on the wrong model — on the notion of duplicating LANDSAT or military reconnaissance systems. A media satellite could operate quite differently. Its navigation could be far less precise. It would usually photograph pre-selected targets rather than scan large swaths of territory, so the frame of the pictures it took could be small, reducing the quantity of data in each. It would also take relatively few photographs per day because much of the world would not be of topical interest. This low volume of information could be taped and transmitted slowly to a modest ground station.

"There are a lot of things that can be done to cut the cost, and we need to start taking a look at them," says Stillman Chase, an assistant laboratory manager at Hughes Aircraft, whose cost estimates were cited in the OTA report. "I think we need to step up the activity." Another company looking carefully at the possibility of developing an inexpensive media satellite is Pacific American Launch Systems, whose president, Gary Hudson, says that a system with resolution of about one meter can be built and put into operation for "under fifty million dollars. Quite a bit under."

That's the kind of thing it will take to break the ice. Until then, the networks, the government, and the aerospace industry will continue to stand around eyeing one another, nervously wondering whether the whole issue is real. ■

Letter from Chile

by TINA ROSENBERG

On March 31, one day before his arrival in Chile, Pope John Paul II called Chile's General Augusto Pinochet a "dictator." It was the signal the government had been dreading and the opposition had been hoping for. If the pope had made his remark two weeks earlier, it is likely that few Chileans would have heard about it — it did not appear at all in the extensive story in *El Mercurio*, Chile's most influential, firmly pro-government newspaper, even though a *Mercurio* reporter had been with the pope on his plane when he made the statement. But *La Epoca*, Chile's first opposition daily under Pinochet, had made its debut two weeks before, and it devoted three-quarters of its front page to the pope's remarks. For the first time since 1973, a daily newspaper offered Chile a major unofficial story.

La Epoca was one of two daily newspapers born early this year. The other, *Fortín Mapocho*, a left-wing opposition weekly, became a daily on April 14. It might seem surprising that Pinochet, Chile's military dictator since his overthrow of socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973, would allow two opposition dailies to exist. But it is in fact consistent with the techniques of selective repression that Pinochet has used to maintain his hold in Chile, a country with a large middle class, a 150-year history of democracy, and a tradition of respect for law. Pinochet has had to strike a balance: enough repression to cripple the opposition but not enough to set off alarm bells that could arouse the international community to take action or bring masses of Chileans into the streets.

Press censorship has played an important role in this strategy. After the coup, the government killed thousands of people and often left their bodies in the streets as a warning to other political activists. Although many Chileans knew of the killings, the absence of any word in the press allowed a country exhausted from the chaos of the Allende years to pretend that torture and murder did not

exist. This willful blindness persists among the elites who run Chile: the businessmen, the armed forces, and the government officials who make up much of the 15 percent of the country that polls show still supports Pinochet.

But the majority of Chileans have grown less tolerant of human rights abuses with each year the regime stays in power, and so the abuses have grown more subtle. Today, fourteen years after the coup, the regime kills about fifty-five or sixty people a year. More killings would probably be counterproductive; they are not necessary to contain the opposition and would contradict the government's claim that it is moving towards democracy.

The balance today has tipped towards loosening controls on the press. The constitution that Pinochet's government wrote and that Chileans approved in 1980 provides for a plebiscite by 1989: a yes-or-no vote on a candidate to be named by the military junta. If the candidate loses, free elections will follow the next year. Although many, probably most, Chileans do not believe him, Pinochet has maintained that he will abide by the rules. The regime has begun to legalize opposition parties and register voters, although the registration process is too costly and lengthy for many people in poor communities. Moving towards democracy also implies a freer press. "If you don't have some opposition media in a country that's supposed to be in transition to democracy," says Max Laulé, the director of the Chilean Journalists Association, "it signifies you are still a dictatorship."

Pinochet has always used press censorship selectively, turning up the heat only when it was needed. The government has allowed several opposition weekly magazines to exist, although they have been closed or censored and their reporters jailed or threatened during various states of siege — most were closed and an editor of one magazine was murdered, for example, during the state of siege following the assassination attempt on Pinochet in September 1986 — or when they have dared to print ar-

ticles the government deems insulting to Pinochet or the military. Despite the risks, the magazines have published an astonishing variety of hard-hitting attacks on the government, including charges of corruption, murder, and torture. Their colorful covers fill kiosks on practically every corner in downtown Santiago. Many think they are permitted to exist because they circulate among a small group of committed opponents and provide a relatively harmless outlet for dissent. Several radio stations are also allowed to report opposition news under the same repressive restrictions.

But while this has the advantage for Pinochet of allowing him to claim that Chile has a free press, only pro-government news has appeared in the country's most important newspaper, *El Mercurio*, and on television, which is the sole source of news for most Chileans.

The first time I ever turned on Chile's TV news, I watched an eight-minute story about the widow of a policeman killed "combating terrorism"; the story dealt mainly with the scholarships the

Tina Rosenberg is a free-lance writer covering Latin America.

Bob Strong/Reuter/Bettmann





Selective violence:
Last September, following an abortive assassination attempt on Pinochet, several opposition weeklies were closed. José Carrasco, international editor of *Análisis* (left), was murdered. Despite the risks, the surviving opposition weeklies continue to attack the regime, publishing charges of corruption, torture, and murder.

government was providing to her children and ended with the woman's long, gushing statement of gratitude to President Pinochet. To TV viewers, Chile is a wonderland where happy children learn in their new schoolhouse, visiting dignitaries smile with the president, and people erupt into spontaneous demonstrations of support for the government. The TV news in Chile reminded me very much of the TV news in Nicaragua, where the government is at least frank enough to call the program "Sandinista News." Two of Chile's three major channels are state-run, and so controlled that they censored papal ceremonies, blocking the speeches of the slum-dwellers and young people whom the Catholic church had chosen to make presentations to the pope. When *The Official Story*, an Argentine film about political disappearances there, won an Academy Award for best foreign-language film of 1985, Chile's state TV deleted the award from its Oscar broadcast. The third national channel, run by the church, enjoys a bit more freedom than the others.

Chile's opposition politicians hate *El Mercurio*, but I have yet to find one who doesn't read it every day. It is beautifully written and unfailingly supportive of the regime. The paper has always been con-

servative — it received CIA funds during the Allende years — but its politics are now reinforced by its economics. *Mercurio* borrowed money to modernize in the late 1970s and by 1985 owed \$100 million to the government, which had assumed the debt. When one church official was asked to comment on a *Mercurio* editorial, he told a reporter, "That's not my opinion. That's the opinion of the principal debtor of the State Bank."

Self-censorship is also encouraged by the Pinochet government's deliberate use of violence. The journalists' association says that fourteen reporters have been killed since the coup. This is a smaller number than in some other Latin countries, but in Colombia, for example, violence is directed largely at those who cover drug trafficking; in Chile politics is the riskiest beat. The killings tend to be so brutal that one death goes a long way toward intimidating other reporters. José Carrasco, for example, the international editor of the opposition weekly *Análisis*, was pulled from his house in pajamas early in the morning the day after the assassination attempt on Pinochet. He was found later that day, shot thirteen times.

Lately, the government has stepped up its attacks on the foreign press. Government spokesmen have accused foreign reporters of focusing on the negative things about the regime — which is true, but misses the point. The government has temporarily expelled UPI's bureau chief and in 1986 it closed Reuters briefly.

This year a German reporter was arrested and the UPI chief's house was broken into, his files searched, and his computer — and nothing else — stolen. Foreign correspondents are only beginning to experience what Chilean journalists have suffered for years. It is the rare opposition journalist who has not received death threats or been beaten, jailed, or followed. "When you go to a demonstration you always run the risk of being beaten and detained," says Laulié of the journalists' association. "When you signal that you are a journalist they use more force."

By his own account, Jorge Lavandero, the fifty-six-year-old president of *Fortín Mapocho*, has survived twenty attempts on his life. In March 1984, twelve men beat him up, putting him in a coma with severe head injuries. Lavandero was a Christian Democratic congressman and senator. During a trip

he made to Paris in 1982, a group of Chilean exiles encouraged him to start a newspaper and later helped raise the money. Because government permission was necessary to start a new publication, Lavandero bought an old paper (*Fortín Mapocho* means fort of the Mapochos, an Indian tribe) that had started in 1947 as the newsletter of a soccer team and turned it into a weekly opposition pamphlet. Staff members worked on two typewriters in Lavandero's house; their only pay was cups of coffee. The government has jailed practically everyone on the staff — an editor and reporter were held for three weeks in June for "insulting the military" and were freed on bail with a trial to come — and closed the paper twice. But *Fortín* fought back in court, winning not only the right to exist but three months' back income as well. By 1986, Lavandero says, *Fortín* had reached a weekly circulation of 50,000 and was the third largest weekly in Chile.

Fortín reminds me of a college newspaper. For security reasons the old house that serves as its office carries no name on the door. Inside, the house is drafty, floorboards are rotting, and journalists in miniskirts and jeans tap away on old Remingtons. It took ten minutes to get a telephone line to make a call and, during my visit, one week before the paper went daily, the electricity went out.

Lavandero wants *Fortín* to be a "people's paper." It carries interviews with slum-dwellers about food prices, news of increases in the price of heating gas, interviews with community leaders. The tabloid is as much a political tract as *El Mercurio*, its editorial board assembled from representatives of the moderate left of Chile's seventeen or so opposition parties. *Fortín*'s problem is that because it tries to appeal to poor Chileans it can attract little advertising. (The minimum wage in Chile is about \$40 a month, which will not buy a loaf of bread, a pint of milk, and an egg each day for each person in a family of four, never mind housing, clothing, or medicine.) And few members of its intended audience can spend thirty cents a day — more than a quarter of the daily minimum wage — on a newspaper.

La Epoca is not competing with *Fortín*, but with *El Mercurio*. "We need a serious paper that can answer the re-

gime," says Emilio Filippi, fifty-eight, the paper's editor. "We're not looking for high circulation. Public opinion is formed in the elite sectors. The New York *Daily News* sells a lot more copies than *The New York Times* does. We want credibility."

La *Epoca*'s office looks less like *Fortín*'s than like the newsroom of *The Washington Post*, with carpeting, banks of VCRs, and glassed-in offices for top editors. Its reporters, who are paid salaries competitive with those of *El Mercurio*, come from various news organizations, ranging from the opposition magazines to UPI to *La Nación*, the government's official newspaper. *La Epoca*, a tabloid that looks like Madrid's *El País*, won authorization to publish in June 1986, after a two-and-a-half-year court battle. Filippi says it was started with \$1.5 million raised from twenty-four Chilean investors — five times the start-up financing for the daily *Fortín*, according to Lavandero.

Filippi, who won the Maria Moors Cabot prize in 1983, and his second-in-command had been editors of the Christian Democratic weekly, *Hoy*. But *La Epoca* is not a party newspaper. It is "objective" in the sense that *The New*

York Times is — the only such paper I have seen in Latin America. It covers news of the Christian Democrats, Chile's largest party, but also runs interviews with Communist leaders and government officials. *La Epoca* specializes in the intricate minuet of Chilean politics, finance, culture, and social concern. It runs the foreign reports of *El País* and is starting an investigative team, also a rarity in Latin America.

La Epoca has already prodded *El Mercurio* to widen its coverage: a month after *La Epoca*'s birth, for example, *El Mercurio* published a long interview with Allende's foreign minister, an exiled socialist leader who had returned clandestinely to Chile. *El Mercurio* has started to print statements from Communist leaders, unthinkable before now.

La Epoca may prove more threatening to the regime than the outspoken *Fortín*. Many of Chile's elite still deny that torture or hunger exists in Chile; they have shown a breathtaking capacity to believe in the wonderland that television and *El Mercurio* present. The very sobriety and grayness of *La Epoca* could make it into a credible second paper for the elite, the only possible way to puncture the bubble insulating the people who are likely to decide Chile's future. ■

New voices: *La Epoca*, edited by Emilio Filippi (below, left) strives to be objective.

"We need a serious paper that can answer the regime," Filippi says. Jorge Lavandero (bottom) wants his more partisan *Fortín Mapocho* to be "a people's paper."



CJR/Miguel Angel Lavandeira La Epoca



CJR/Luis Navarro

The Great BLOOM COUNTY Feud

Why cartoonists got mad at the Pulitzer board

by NEIL A. GRAUER

The nation's political cartoonists were seething with anger when they convened in Washington, D.C., this past May for the thirtieth annual convention of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists. What angered many of them was that this year's Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning had been awarded to Berke Breathed, creator of the comic strip "Bloom County." To laughter and loud applause, cartoonist Pat Oliphant, himself a Pulitzer winner, told the convention that in choosing Breathed's strip the Pulitzer board had "selected the darling of the gift-shop merchandisers. . . . This year 'Bloom County,' next year 'Garfield.' " The Pulitzer judges, he said, had "completely debased the prestige of the award that symbolized for years the best that graphic . . . opinion . . . had to offer."

Neil A. Grauer, who lives in Baltimore, is the author of Wits & Sages, a book about columnists. He is now working on a book about editorial cartoonists.

While many of the cartoonists who attended the convention professed to admire Breathed's comic strip, they insisted it was not an editorial cartoon. "I personally like it, but it's not editorializing," said David Wiley Miller, editorial cartoonist for the *San Francisco Examiner* and a one-time comic-strip artist. Giving the Pulitzer to Breathed, Miller said, was "tantamount to awarding the investigative reporting or editorializing award to Ann Landers."

The brouhaha over Breathed's Pulitzer is symptomatic of the longstanding desire of editorial cartoonists to be taken seriously as journalists and commentators, even if what they do is often funny. Older, established cartoonists fear that many of their younger colleagues lack ideological passion and would rather make jokes than score political points. Some dismiss many of the younger cartoonists as little more than gag writers for the Johnny Carson show.

In an effort to obtain a role for cartoonists in the judging and selection of the next Pulitzer Prize-winner in their field,

The winner: In a statement that he asked to have read at the cartoonists' convention (the request was turned down), Berke Breathed angrily defended his work. "It was pointed out to me that there is a conspicuous absence of politics from the environs of Bloom County," he declared. "I certainly hope so. In its place, however, is a plethora of drug-testing, book-banning, fundamentalist foolery, Iacocca-bashing, Hollywood-mashing, hypocrite-hacking, celebrity-slashing, and all-round myth-debunking. . . ." The Breathed strip shown here, one of several submitted to the Pulitzer judges, does make a political point: that presidential elections start too early and go on too long.

BLOOM COUNTY / By Berke Breathed

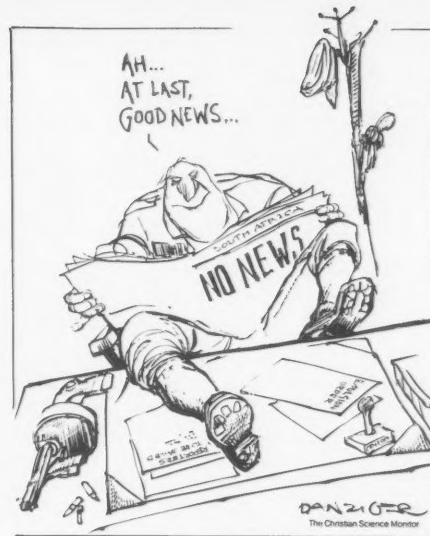


the association's leaders have assembled a list of nine distinguished students of the art who have said they would willingly serve on either the Pulitzer jury or board. They are Tim Atseff, deputy managing editor and editorial cartoonist of the Syracuse, New York, *Herald-Journal*; Lucy Caswell, curator of the Library for Communications and Graphic Arts at Ohio State University; Karl Hubenthal, the retired longtime editorial cartoonist of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*; caricaturist David Levine; Pat Oliphant; Kate Salley Palmer, former editorial cartoonist for the Greenville, South Carolina, *News*; cartoonist Arnold Roth; Richard Samuel West of *Target*, *The Political Cartoon Quarterly*; and Art Wood, an editorial cartoonist who is also a renowned collector and historian of cartoon art.

Roger Wilkins, chairman of the Pulitzer board, says that the board is "surely going to listen to the complaints [of the editorial cartoonists] and to any suggestions that are made . . . and make a judgment about whether there aren't ways these observations should inform our thinking in the future." He hastens to add, however, that he would "hate for either the criticism of [Breathed's] award or the fact that the board is receptive to comments and criticism to diminish in any way the luster of the award to Breathed. If we had not thought his work was the best work in that category presented to us, we obviously would not have awarded that prize to him."

The cartoons reprinted on these pages suggest what the uproar at the convention was all about.

The runners-up: Three samples of the work of the runners-up for this year's Pulitzer Prize for cartooning show the kind of cartoons the judges passed up in favor of a non-ideological but wittily satirical comic strip. For the most part, these cartoonists take a political stand in their work, carrying home their point in the traditional, more confining (and more difficult) format of a single box. Jeff Danziger of The Christian Science Monitor, who briefly drew a comic strip about newspapering called "McGonigle of the Chronicle," leaves no question about his feelings toward the repressive South African regime, deftly twisting the cliché "no news is good news" to his purpose. David Horsey of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer (who draws the strip "Boomer's Song," about the baby-boom generation), clearly feels that Secretary of State George Shultz should not have been left in the dark about the administration's dealings with Iran, and ridicules security-obsessed White House operatives as children hiding in a secret clubhouse. Henry Payne of Scripps Howard depicts President Reagan — and the arms-for-hostages deal — as a turkey that Democrats gratefully received on the eve of Thanksgiving, when this cartoon appeared. Expertly drawn (the caricature of Reagan as a turkey is especially good), this cartoon seems to take less of a partisan stand than the others: Republicans looking at it could ignore his appearance as a turkey and enjoy the unflattering portrait of Democrats preparing to take advantage of the Iranian mess; Democrats could applaud the labeling of the policy as a "debacle." N.A.G.



BOOKS

AI's baby

**The Making of McPaper:
The Inside Story of USA Today**
by Peter Prichard
Andrews, McMeel & Parker. 400 pp.
\$19.95

by CHRIS WELLES

They laughed when Allen H. Neuharth, chairman and chief executive of Gannett Co., Inc., announced on December 15, 1980, that Gannett was considering publication of a national, general-interest daily newspaper. Nobody had ever put out such a paper. Newspapers generally were hardly a growth industry, and some of the big ones seemed to be declining, even dying.

They kept on laughing when Neuharth on September 15, 1982, launched *USA Today* in the Washington-Baltimore market. Critics said that the project, which sold a mere 155,000 copies that first day, was a quixotic ego trip.

They haven't stopped laughing. *USA Today* has achieved an average daily circulation of 1.5 million and a readership, according to Simmons Market Research Bureau, of 5.5 million, the largest of any newspaper and a million more than *The Wall Street Journal*. But since its launch it has rolled up after-tax operating losses of \$233 million, according to Gannett. The figure would be much greater if one included over \$200 million in capital expenditures and the cost of borrowing employees from other Gannett newspapers to work on the project. Despite a small monthly operating profit last May, the paper will still report a loss for 1987.

Whether or not *USA Today* becomes the financial bonanza Neuharth has always envisioned, the paper's survival is assured. It will undoubtedly continue to be funded, if necessary, by the lush

Chris Welles, a former director of the Walter Bagehot Fellowship Program in Economics and Business Journalism at Columbia University, is a senior writer at Business Week.

profits from Gannett's stable of ninety local papers, most of them monopolies.

And there is no question, despite the laughing, that *USA Today* has changed the look and texture of American newspapers. But even as they imitate *USA Today* — even to the point of running big color weather maps — editors and publishers continue to ridicule the paper as info McNuggets for an increasingly illiterate public hooked on junk food and video games. The sophisticated, artfully crafted thousand-word analysis of a vital but complex issue, they claim, is an endangered species, victim of an especially pernicious form of Gresham's Law.

My own view — and I confess to shelling out fifty cents every weekday for the paper — is that *USA Today*, despite lapses into glitz and frivolity, is a much better publication than its critics give it credit for, which is one reason it has so many imitators. Many of the core values it embodies, such as tight, clear writing and attractive makeup, are right out of Journalism 101, not elements of some alien revolutionary manifesto. *USA Today* is designed to be a supplemental read, and any publication whose existence it threatens isn't doing its job.

For all its virtues, *USA Today*, as its huge operating losses indicate, was not the sort of better mousetrap that immediately generated long lines at its blue-and-white sidewalk vending machines. Its survival stems not only from Gannett's deep pockets but also from the iron will, relentless energy, and towering ego of Al Neuharth.

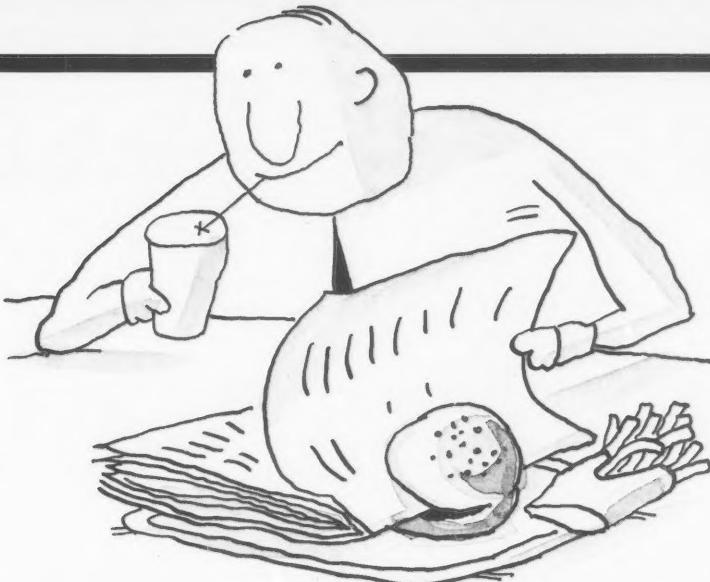
This emerges clearly in *The Making of McPaper*, an authorized history of *USA Today's* first five years by Peter Prichard, *USA Today's* deputy editorial director, who took a year to write the book. Prichard should have taken a couple of additional months for some rewriting. The book is disjointed and haphazardly organized. It reads a little like several hundred *USA Today* stories

strung together, too many facts and not enough prose.

The book, though, is remarkably revealing for an authorized account. Prichard had broad access to corporate records. He told *The New York Times* that he was not censored or edited by Neuharth and that "I told everything I could find out." He found out a lot and the book contains fascinating, often unflattering detail about nasty infighting, operational foul-ups, and Neuharth's often brutal management style.

USA Today was nothing less than an obsession for Neuharth — he had dreamed about the idea of a national newspaper for years — and in launching it he gave new meaning to the term "hands-on management." His fingers were involved in virtually every detail. For the first year, he personally laid out the paper every day. He constantly monitored vending machines, printing plants, and other facilities around the country. At the discovery of even minor lapses, he would unleash terrifying tantrums and memos. In one postscript, he warned that "the lazy, the sloppy, the unenthusiastic, the uninspired will not be working around *USA Today* very long." "Sometimes he managed by persuasion, sometimes by fear," Prichard notes. His propensity for replacing people who didn't measure up "bordered on panic management." Prichard quotes one senior executive as saying, "He would have been better off if he had backed away a little and let people help him. Every time we try to critique *USA Today* and give him suggestions, he thinks we're peeing on his project, and we're not."

The most frequent targets of Neuharth's excoriation were Gannett's financial executives, who were very skeptical of the paper's chances for success. Neuharth, through interviews with Prichard, gives them a further going-over in the book. He calls them, among other things, "enemies from within" who "didn't keep the job from getting done" but "made it a hell of a lot more difficult." Prichard, who clearly agrees with Neuharth, says that opposition by Douglas H. McCorkindale, the chief financial officer, cost him



CJRI?Julie Aschl

his chances of succeeding Neuharth as c.e.o., a post recently awarded to John J. Curley, the paper's first editor. (In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, McCorkindale said, "I disagree with how I was characterized, but that's a book. It's a book written to show how to establish a success.") He added that planning for the paper "was full of holes. They didn't want questions raised because it would raise more questions, and people don't like that.")

Neuharth's campaign against nay-sayers sometimes bordered on the bizarre. Around Thanksgiving 1984, he summoned a group of *USA Today* executives to a dinner in a private dining room at a Florida restaurant. They were seated along a long table set up to resemble the Last Supper, with jugs of Manischewitz and pieces of unleavened bread. Neuharth appeared wearing a crown of thorns. Standing in front of a huge wooden cross, he announced, "I am the crucified one." He informed them that the event was "The Service for the Passed-Over," based on the Jewish Passover ceremony. If *USA Today* did not cut its losses, he added, they were all going to be "passed over" and the meal might be their own last supper.

Neuharth's special assistant, a Southern Baptist named Charles Overby, told Prichard that the crucifixion scene "was the most offensive thing I have seen in my adult life. I was waiting for lightning to strike the place down, I was so mor-

tified." Neuharth explained later that some of the paper's executives were "getting lethargic" and needed to be "jarred into reality. . . . Those who got the humor of it laughed; those who were offended didn't get it."

Despite, or sometimes because of, Neuharth's hands-on approach, *USA Today* was plagued by operational problems. Some stemmed from the novelty of the paper's production. Obtaining consistent high-quality color reproduction on a daily deadline at twenty printing plants around the country proved an especially intractable problem. Newsprint and ink, which vary widely from supplier to supplier, had to meet identical specifications. When one plant proved unable to create an acceptable image, its crews spent days searching for the trouble. It turned out that leaves falling into the river from which the plant drew water to mix with the ink had changed the water's PH level. Water conditioners had to be installed at all of the paper's presses.

Other problems were less excusable. *USA Today's* computer systems were a mess, in part, says Prichard, because of Neuharth's "general ignorance about computers." The impact on the paper's circulation procedures was especially noxious. An internal committee in 1983 concluded that "circulation was a management disaster, of nationwide proportions." In some cities, there were no reliable sales records. It took the Audit

Bureau of Circulations six months to complete its first audit in 1984.

The following year, *USA Today* worked out a circulation promotion program with General Mills. By sending in proof-of-purchase seals for eight General Mills products, a consumer could get six months of *USA Today* free. General Mills agreed to pay for the first 52,000 subscriptions, which was the limit on the number of promotion subs that ABC rules permitted a paper to count as paid circulation. The number of returns turned out to be 512,000, far greater than circulation officials expected. The deluge of orders nearly destroyed the paper's fulfillment system and ended up costing Gannett \$12 million.

Neuharth, though, persevered through these and many other crises. At a time when American corporate managers are being berated for their short-term perspective and other publishing organizations such as Time Inc. are killing off new ventures with inauspicious starts after a few issues, Neuharth remained in dogged pursuit of his vision. The product of that vision may be McNuggets to some, but for my fifty cents it's a Big Mac.

Rover in the clover

National Geographic:
Behind America's Lens On the World
by Howard S. Abramson
Crown. 279 pp. \$17.95

by PETER SCHRAG

Riddle: What has a very large income, is legally tax exempt, and has bare boobs? The answer, as almost anyone in publishing can tell you, is the *National Geographic*, which (to compound the riddle) is one of the last great Victorian relics in America, and surely the most lucrative.

Granted, the bare boobs are permissible only on nonwhite women; on at least one occasion, it is said, when the editors were confronted with a photo of a Polynesian woman who seemed a shade too light-skinned for exposure, the picture was touched up to make her suit-

Peter Schrag is the editorial page editor of The Sacramento Bee.

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ably dark. And, granted, the tax exemption, thanks to an IRS ruling subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, has been slightly modified to make the magazine's advertising income taxable.

But the National Geographic Society, a \$327 million-a-year business that publishes books, maps, and newsletters, as well as the magazine, has always had enough political clout to protect its legal status as a nonprofit educational organization. Although created "for the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge," it probably spends proportionately no more on research and learning than IBM or Time Inc. Nonetheless, it pays no income tax on the dues/subscriptions of its 11 million members/subscribers; it enjoys some \$10 million a year in postal subsidies; and it is subject to no property taxes on its enormous real estate holdings in downtown Washington (now worth upward of \$33 million) and in suburban Maryland (worth at least another \$6 million). Back in 1941, when Washington's city government threatened to end the *Geographic's* tax exemption in the Dis-

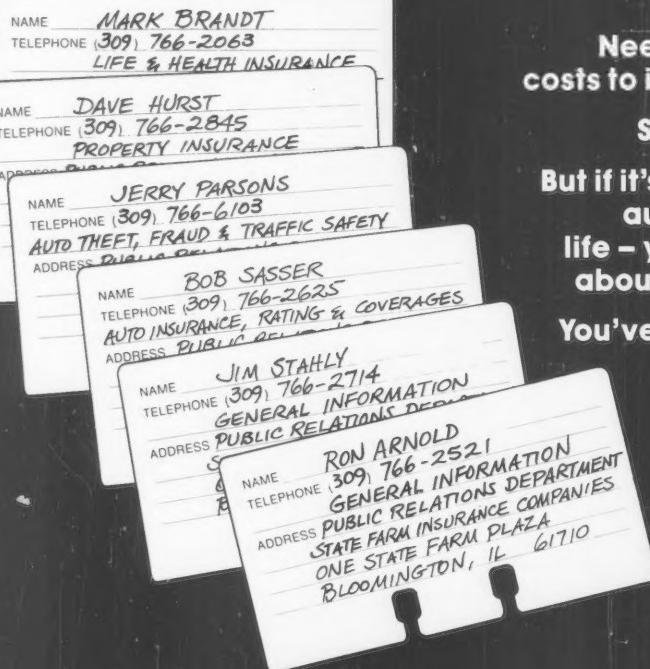
trict of Columbia, the society rapidly got an act of Congress to block the move. As a consequence, the *Geographic* has, to put it charitably, an enormous advantage over its competitors.

Howard Abramson, a financial editor at *The Washington Post*, has set out to tell the story of this curious creature in what the publisher's blurb says "is the first-ever book-length account of one of America's most powerful and mysterious institutions." In that effort Abramson has assembled a great deal of useful, if sometimes familiar, material: about the founding of the society by Alexander Graham Bell and his son-in-law, Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor, who went on to run the place for some sixty years; about the continuing control of the society, despite its claims to be a membership organization, by members of the Grosvenor family; about the internal imperative, since the *Geographic* is legally a nonprofit institution, to find ways to spend what it calls its surplus (by providing senior staff members chauffeur-driven limousines and other perks; by giving its writers huge expense accounts and urg-

ing them to travel first-class; by paying cash for its new multimillion-dollar building); and about the WASP (and male) ethnocentricity which still characterizes it.

Grosvenor the First made the *Geographic* the enormous success it became partly through his pioneering use of large numbers of photographs, photographs that were technically flawless but esthetically banal; partly by the equally banal use of first-person articles in which never was heard a discouraging word; and partly by understanding the enormous appetite the country had for nice, pleasant pieces about faraway places, animals, and people. "Only what is of a kindly nature is printed about any country or people," Grosvenor ruled, "everything unpleasant or unduly critical being avoided." And so there have been happy accounts of the Hitler Youth, of Mussolini cleaning up Italy, even (much to William Buckley's chagrin) of Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Along the way, the *Geographic* sponsored (or piggy-backed on) the travels of some notable people, most particu-



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larly the arctic explorer Robert E. Peary. The society not only supported Peary with money but, having committed itself to him, set itself up as a purportedly impartial body to render public judgment in his acrimonious dispute with Frederick A. Cook about who first reached the North Pole (assuming, of course, that at least one of them did, a fact apparently never proven). Not surprisingly, the *Geographic's* committee not only ruled in Peary's favor, despite an embarrassing lack of evidence, but campaigned relentlessly (with even less evidence) to prove that, far from having beaten Peary to the pole, Cook had never gotten there at all. Thus is history made.

All of this is wonderful stuff. And yet in telling it, Abramson relies to an embarrassing extent on the conclusions and observations of others: old books, some news stories, and, most particularly, a couple of magazine pieces, one by Tom Buckley that appeared in *The New York Times* in 1970, one by Geoffrey Hellman that ran in *The New Yorker* in 1943. It's understandable that when (as in this case) the subject refuses to cooperate, other sources must be found. But the *Geographic*, after all, is a magazine that's been published every month for almost 100 years; it has more than 1,000 employees, some of whom must surely be willing to talk; it has some quasi-competitors; and it must have a well-established reputation (along with ample data) in the advertising industry. Those things alone should enable a writer not only to describe and analyze the society's essential appeal but, more important, to use that appeal as an insight into a major strain of American culture.

The *Geographic* grew out of the age when this country — indeed all of the West — first got relatively easy access to, and became fascinated by, the larger world, fascinated in terms that took for granted its own racial and cultural superiority: Phileas Fogg on slick paper. At the same time, contrary to Abramson's implicit assumption, the *Geographic* cannot really be judged as a journalistic enterprise. Rather, like Disneyland, with which it shares no end of cultural attitudes, it's essentially enter-

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tainment — the real world cleaned up, prettified, and banalized. (Who, after all, wants reality in a dentist's waiting room?) It offered — and still offers — clean romance, safe adventure, and constant social reinforcement for the little old lady in Dubuque and all her children. It tells us something about who we are. It thus invites a somewhat different analysis and a less starchily working over than Abramson gives it.

Occasionally, a few dark clouds enter

the *Geographic*'s pages these days; the clean-up of Chernobyl, complete with gorgeous diagrams, appears in the May issue, though even that's described with great good cheer. But the positive monotone of the prose and photos hasn't changed, and one has to wonder how long that can continue in an ambiguous high-tech world in which the romance of distant places becomes ever more difficult to maintain. Abramson points out that the *Geographic*'s renewal rate,

though still the highest in the business, seems to be slipping a bit. That hardly means impending failure, but as the *Geographic* approaches its centennial in 1988, it does suggest that its formula may eventually run its course. In that same May issue, the magazine ran a piece titled "New Zealand: The Last Utopia?" If the answer is affirmative, everybody's in trouble — the *National Geographic* most of all.

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The credulous and the complacent

Selling Science: How the Press Covers Science and Technology

by Dorothy Nelkin

W. H. Freeman. 225 pp. \$16.95

by ROBERT ANDERSEN

"Science writers," writes Dorothy Nelkin, "are brokers, framing social reality for their readers and shaping the public consciousness about science-related events." In recent years those events have come fast and furiously, and there has been much reality to frame. From AIDS to nuclear winter, Bhopal to Chernobyl, Challenger to Star Wars, a cat's cradle of improbable, outsized, and often terrifying issues has landed in the science writer's lap. Of baffling complexity and often global consequence, these issues impose severe, perhaps impossible, demands on science reporters. Writing to deadline on a breaking story is one thing; writing to deadline while interpreting an alien "social reality" is quite another. Too often the harried (and snowed) reporter resorts to shortcuts, stock framing, facile imagery, and pumped-up controversy. When ozone depletion made its debut, in the mid-1970s, the apocalypse cast a shadow over the news: the earth may have already committed partial suicide, said *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Never mind that the inconclusive (and contested) data hardly warranted the doomsday treatment. In similar fashion the birth of the first test-tube baby was hailed in the press both as a miracle of love and science and as a harbinger of a brave new

Robert Andersen is a free-lance writer in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

BOOKS

world. Battling the reader between miracle and mirage, millenium and apocalypse, polarized copy highlights an approach to science writing that is only too prevalent.

The standard style, argues Dorothy Nelkin in *Selling Science*, is a terrible simplifier. Romanticizing science and rhapsodizing about technology, it militates against understanding the "complex technical matters that affect our lives." Writing as a partisan of an informed and involved citizenry, Nelkin deplores the credulity and complacency of mainstream science reporters. "Unaggressive in their reporting and relying on official sources, science journalists . . . are in effect retailing science and technology more than investigating them, identifying with their sources more than challenging them."

Nelkin cites the Challenger disaster and the ozone controversy as signal instances of feckless journalism. "Fascinated with the technology," she writes, "reporters for years had simply accepted what NASA fed them, reproducing the agency's assertions, promoting the pre-packaged information they received, and rarely questioning the premises of the program, the competence of the scientists, or the safety of the operation." Likewise, the rediscovery of ozone depletion, coming a decade after the EPA imposed its ban on aerosol spray cans, underscored the negligence of "news"-oriented science journalism. Focusing on the aerosol ban, the press failed to investigate the continuing widespread use of chlorofluorocarbons, the agent of depletion. Instead, the subject dropped from sight altogether once the aerosol ban went into effect. Nelkin finds this default emblematic of the superficial coverage of this important story. Indeed, the lapse lent credibility to industry stonewalling on regulation. The upshot of journalistic default, Nelkin concludes, was the needless exacerbation of an already serious problem.

Nelkin, who teaches in Cornell's Program on Science, Technology, and Society, is the author of several groundbreaking studies of science policy. Here, focusing on the primary source of public information about science and technology — the daily press and general cir-

culation magazines — she attributes the "surprising" homogeneity of science journalism to the "similar cultural biases and professional constraints" of the field. Paramount among the biases is an exaggerated reverence for the "mystique of science"; foremost among the constraints is the "vulnerability" to sources.

Nelkin begins by recounting the saga of interferon, the cancer cure-all. The press coverage, she notes, was charac-

terized by several striking features, including the (mis)representation of research as a series of dramatic events, the resort to hyperbole and outright promotion, and the focus on competition — the race for breakthroughs. Citing these as characteristic of science reporting in general, Nelkin argues that the profession shares a "style, an imagery, and a particular world view."

The dominant message conveyed is that each new development will give so-

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C.J. Niculae Ascui

society the "magic to cure economic or social ills." Thus, high-tech is trumpeted as the "dawn of a new era," the "wave of the future," the "force for revolutionary change." Nelkin, quoting this inflated language at length, writes that the press has uncritically adopted corporate rhetoric. The result is a public relations binge — promises of relief from heart disease (transplants, artificial hearts), menopause (estrogen replacement therapy), criminality (psychosurgery), and infertility (test-tube procreation).

When the risks that technology poses are too grave to be suppressed, the press has looked to the "acid test of scientific review" to resolve all uncertainties and restore order. Nelkin recounts briefly the ozone, saccharin, and dioxin disputes. In each case the press was confronted with complex technical information and conflicting expertise. In each case the press, unable or unwilling to fathom the tricky science involved, fell back on stock framing: the balancing of contradictory claims, the identification of vested interests, the scrutiny of regulatory agency credibility. "As in the coverage of the artificial sweeteners," Nelkin writes, "risk appears as a mystery to be resolved by a court of scientists." Above all, the science press perpetuates the image of science as a "neutral source of authority and a basis for just solutions in controversial public affairs."

In her review of the constraints of the trade, Nelkin devotes a chapter to the peculiar culture of science journalism. Science journalists, she observes, tend to be apolitical, "dissociate science from politics," revere their subject matter, espouse a norm of objectivity borrowed from nineteenth-century science, and generally "identify more closely with their subject and their sources than do journalists in many other fields."

This identification is an ironic one, given the ambivalent if not adversarial attitude scientists manifest toward their journalist counterparts. Nelkin devotes her final chapters to examining the growth of science propaganda and public relations — the "strategies of control" employed by scientists and institutions to ensure favorable copy and to influence the images of science in the press.

Those images are political capital now that science is integrally linked to power over public affairs. So far, that power has escaped public scrutiny and debate, and, barring the critical and probing science journalism Nelkin would like to see, it will presumably continue to do so. Unfortunately, Nelkin's own critical and probing analysis pulls up short. Without a better idea of how science journalism might meet its social responsibility, it is difficult to see how it can escape its present constraints. In any case, this is a provocative and important book. ■

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The Hart affair

TO THE REVIEW:

Those of us involved directly in reporting the Gary Hart story recognize the importance of CJR's efforts to analyze our articles to extract some journalistic guidelines. Indeed, that is the essence of your role in American journalism.

The line between a presidential candidate's privacy and the public's right to know is an ever-shifting one. When responsible reporters and editors approach that line — or knowingly cross it, as we did in reporting on Senator Hart — we must do so only after the most careful consideration of the consequences and after concluding that what we intend to report is germane to the campaign.

It is unfortunate that John B. Judis's examination of this situation ("The Hart Affair," CJR, July/August) is tainted with errors of fact that could have been avoided by more careful reporting. He had access to the *Herald's* exhaustive report on the controversy. We have made every effort to respond to questions about our handling of the Hart story. It is regrettable that Mr. Judis refused to interview one of the principals involved, investigative reporter Jim McGee, and held only perfunctory interviews with political editor Tom Fiedler and investigations editor Jim Savage.

To keep the record straight, we would like to offer these clarifications of facts cited in Judis's commentary:

1: "Hart had told the *Herald* that Donna Rice had left from the back entrance of his townhouse 'ten or fifteen minutes' after they had arrived on Friday night at eleven."

At no time during his interview with us did Hart discuss the details of the departure of Donna Rice from his townhouse on the night of May 1. More important, he never raised the idea of her leaving through a back door, as Judis claims. In fact, when Hart was asked, twice, how she had left the townhouse, he replied: "I don't remember."

If, as the Hart campaign said the next day, Rice had left through the rear, garage, entrance with William Broadhurst and Lynn Armandt, Rice's companion, common sense suggests that Hart would have recalled it. Armandt has since stated that the alleged

back-door departure was a fabrication.

2: "And McGee could not have seen anyone leave from the back — the usual exit from this townhouse. . . ."

Judis offers no evidence to buttress his assertion that the back-alley door is "the usual exit" from the townhouse. Hart was observed twice on the night of May 1 using the front door to go to and return from his car, which was parked on the street, not in the garage. At the risk of stating the obvious, what remains important to the story is that *Herald* reporters saw the pair coming and going from the townhouse over the course of two days.

3: "The *Herald's* story failed to mention that Hart's friend William Broadhurst had told the paper's reporters that he and Hart had driven Rice and another woman around suburban Washington on Saturday afternoon. . . ."

Judis has apparently confused the sequence of events because this is absolutely incorrect. The description of the drive around suburban Washington was made by Broadhurst after publication of the first story.

When Broadhurst was interviewed by phone for the first story, he said Rice had stayed at his townhouse, not Hart's. That was included in the first story. But Broadhurst refused to provide any details of what Rice and Hart did on Saturday, saying he had failed to wear his watch that day and therefore could remember no details.

It wasn't until several hours after publication of the first story, when Broadhurst was interviewed Sunday morning at an all-night restaurant, that he mentioned the Saturday afternoon drive. That account was included in the follow-up story Monday morning, along with his other statements about comings and goings through the rear entrance — comings and goings that Armandt later said didn't happen.

4: "The newspaper's desire to be first with the story, however, was apparently greater than its desire to make sure there were no holes in it."

This is Judis's opinion, which he is entitled to share with CJR readers. However, the *Herald's* decision to publish was based on the editors' collective belief that the information contained in the story had been verified in-

dependently or in the interview with Hart, and that he had been given ample opportunity to explain any seeming discrepancies. For example, there was at that time solid information regarding the Hart-Rice meeting at his townhouse, an earlier meeting on a yacht in Miami, and repeated telephone calls between the two as Hart campaigned around the country.

It was made clear to Hart that, unless he had a plausible explanation of his relationship with Rice, the *Herald* intended to publish a story. He said there was no relationship. He offered no further details. He never asked the *Herald* to postpone publication of the story. The *Herald's* initial story was subsequently corroborated by photographs and on-the-record statements from Armandt.

5: "On May 4, refuting Hart's charge that the *Herald* had turned down Broadhurst's offer to let the reporters speak to the women, investigations editor Jim Savage . . . told *The Washington Post*, 'That's totally inaccurate. We were dying to talk to the women. He [Broadhurst] said they were asleep and that he'd talk to them in the morning and see what they wanted to do.' By May 10, the story had changed. Broadhurst told Fiedler that, if he came right over, 'the girls' would be there. . . .'"

There is no contradiction here, as Judis claims. There were two conversations: one between Broadhurst and Fiedler prior to publication of the May 3 story, and one between Broadhurst and Savage following publication. The *Herald's* story never changed.

In closing, the media are crossing delicate terrain as they attempt to strike the balance between a presidential candidate's privacy and the electorate's need to know. CJR is to be commended for its role in furthering discussion of this issue. We regret that Mr. Judis's strong opinions hampered his ability to report accurately and objectively.

JIM SAVAGE
Associate editor/investigations

TOM FIEDLER
Political editor

JIM MCGEE
Investigative reporter
The Miami Herald
Miami, Fla.

John B. Judis replies: *In my article I was*

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MISCELLANEOUS

PARIS HERALD STAFFERS: The International Herald Tribune, lineal descendant of the NYHT's European edition, celebrates the centennial of its founding in early October. If you'd like to be kept current on centennial events in Europe, the United States, and Asia, and if you'd like to participate in some way, let us know. Write: CJR, Box 200.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

primarily concerned with whether, in the absence of an overt link to public behavior, the press should have covered Hart's private life. But I also charged that, leaving aside this question, The Miami Herald published its initial story precipitously and overstated its case. I see no reason to change these conclusions.

I stand corrected on two points — for having stated that, prior to the Herald's first story, Hart had told the newspaper that Rice had left through the back door and that Broadhurst had told the paper that he, Hart, Rice, and Armandt had spent Saturday afternoon driving around. But the main points remain. As the newspaper acknowledged on May 10, the Herald did turn down a possible chance to interview Rice and Armandt before writing the story. This — together with Fiedler's own comments to me that the newspaper was worried about other papers getting the story the next day — was the basis of my contention that "the newspaper's desire to be first with the story . . . was apparently greater than its desire to make sure there were no holes in it."

The Herald said in its original story that a "team" of reporters had verified that Hart and Rice had spent the Friday night together in the townhouse, whereas only one person, McGee, had been watching the house during the time Hart claimed he had taken Rice to Broadhurst's home. And McGee could not have seen the back door, which was the usual exit from the townhouse. Stuart Long, the builder and previous resident of the house, told The Washington Times that the back door was really the "main entrance and exit." Indeed, the Herald was sufficiently aware of the back door exit to have stationed reporters there at other times.

During the week, the Herald did continually change its story of the story. There is a contradiction between Savage's comment to The Washington Post about Broadhurst's offer of an interview and the Herald's May 10 account. In a May 5 Washington Post story, the reporter asked Savage to respond to the Hart campaign's contention that Broadhurst had offered the Herald an opportunity to interview the two women Saturday night — i.e., before the story went to press. Savage told the Post, "That's totally inaccurate. We were dying to talk to the women. [Broadhurst] said they were asleep. . . ." On May 10, the Herald reported that — again before the story had gone to press — "Broadhurst told Fiedler that, if he came right over, 'the girls' would be there." This suggests that the Hart campaign's charges were not "totally inaccurate."

I did interview Fiedler at length (is a

thirty-minute phone interview perfunctory?) and talked to Savage twice. After the article was already in galleys, McGee asked that I go over its conclusions with him so that the paper could offer its interpretation of events. I replied that I was pretty familiar by then with the paper's interpretation.

TO THE REVIEW:

In reading "The Hart Affair" I was struck by John Judis's comment that the action of *The Washington Post* was "commendable" in that it kept the name of the woman it claimed to know had had a long-term sexual relationship with Hart out of the paper. This, in my view — and I am echoing a letter published in *The New York Times* of June 23 — makes the publication of Ms. Rice's name, and photos of her, a bit more reprehensible than appears on the surface.

Judis states that some *Post* reporters and editors knew the other woman personally. There is no indication that they knew Donna Rice. I know neither but am saddened by the fact that, if a story had to be written at all about Hart's sexual history — not to mention Ms. Rice's — a personal acquaintance of some of the paper's reporters and editors escapes the heat.

The letter to the *Times*, written by a woman, impressed me at the time because it suggested just the above.

BERT COWLAN
New York, N.Y.

Editors' note: The letter to which Mr. Cowlan refers, which was written by Susan Anthony, reads in part: "In your June 7 news article, PRIVATE DETECTIVE IS SAID TO LINK HART AND ANOTHER WOMAN, the [other, Washington, D.C.] woman is never identified, even though the story makes it clear that The Washington Post — and therefore, no doubt, The New York Times — knows the identity of the woman. Since the story also makes it plain that Gary Hart and the woman had a more than casual relationship, why is she not identified, when Donna Rice went on to become a household name?"

"The only explanation I can find for this is that Donna Rice was dismissed as a bimbo, while the woman in Washington was not. And the only explanation I can find for this is that the Washington woman is probably older, or married, or well known, or well connected, or all of the above. As well, her apparently long-term relationship with Hart — longer than Donna's anyhow — somehow elevates her into the ranks of those worthy of protection in the eyes of the press."

"Otherwise, why was Donna Rice treated like a bimbo by the media while the myste-

rious Washington woman is being shielded from the public gaze?"

Poverty's missing person

TO THE REVIEW:

Thanks to CJR and Michael Moss ("The Poverty Story," CJR, July/August) for noting the efforts of *New York Newsday* in covering those who live in poverty. But the article failed to mention the name of the one reporter who, on a daily basis, has held city government accountable for its treatment of the poor and who has shown how city policies affect the lives of the poor. That reporter is Sherman Stein of *New York Newsday*.

WILLIAM MURPHY
City hall bureau chief
New York Newsday
New York, N.Y.

The 'official' record

TO THE REVIEW:

As a former court reporter, I read with great interest your Briefings item on Peter Calamai's study of discrepancies between printed quotes and the official court transcript of Canada's celebrated Colin Thatcher trial (CJR, July/August). I, too, have often noticed great differences between direct quotes in my trial copy and those reported by competing journalists. However, I would caution anyone against assuming that the official transcript is a paragon of accuracy.

Only once have I had the luxury of working with an official court transcript. The deadline was sufficiently far ahead and the trial was important for the publication, so I managed to convince my employers to pay the necessary \$60. (In Ontario Provincial Court, transcripts are not prepared from the tapes unless at least one person or company agrees to pay a per-page rate.)

I wanted the transcript in order to be able to check some rather harsh statements a judge had directed towards a defendant which, I believed, I had copied down with great accuracy. When I received the transcript, I was struck by how much more reasoned and softer the judge's decision sounded. Some of his statements bore absolutely no relation to what I had recorded.

Puzzled, I phoned the official court reporter to inquire as to how the transcript had been prepared. I was informed that, after the tapes had been transcribed, the judge had made "corrections." Faced with this knowledge, I used the quotes from my notebook because I believed them to be a more accurate indication of what the judge had actually said on the day of the decision.

One question has always haunted me: Had the judge disputed my reporting, could he have used the official transcript to prove me wrong? I also wonder how widespread the practice of "correcting" transcripts is. Many official court reporters now employ a form of verbal shorthand, using abbreviations as they speak into a recording device, to keep track of what is said at a trial. Since the tapes are transcribed much later, how accurate is this method?

DAN PARLE
Toronto, Ont.

Off-target Dart?

TO THE REVIEW:

In your July/August issue, you throw a Dart at *The Press-Enterprise* because: "As sponsor of a recent Newspaper in Education Month essay contest in which seventh and eighth graders were asked to write on 'how newspapers help to guarantee every citizen's rights given to us in the Constitution,' the paper unblushingly awarded first prize to a 170-word entry that (unlike the runners-up) failed to address the question — but did manage to praise the *Press-Enterprise's* accuracy, fairness, and trustworthiness and to mention its name no less than five times."

While I'm hardly the one to judge, it seems to me that an essay that discusses the public's right to know and the importance of restricting opinions to the editorial page does indeed address the assigned topic. And the award was made not by *The Press-Enterprise* but by a committee that included one representative of the paper and two representatives of the Inland Empire Reading Council.

HOWARD H. HAYS
Editor and publisher
The Press-Enterprise
Riverside, Calif.

The editors reply: We were wrong in indicating that The Press-Enterprise was the sole sponsor of the essay contest, and regret the error. In fact, the contest was conducted jointly by The Press-Enterprise and the Inland Empire Reading Council, each of which should have been awarded half a Dart.

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the November/December issue, letters should be received by September 18. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

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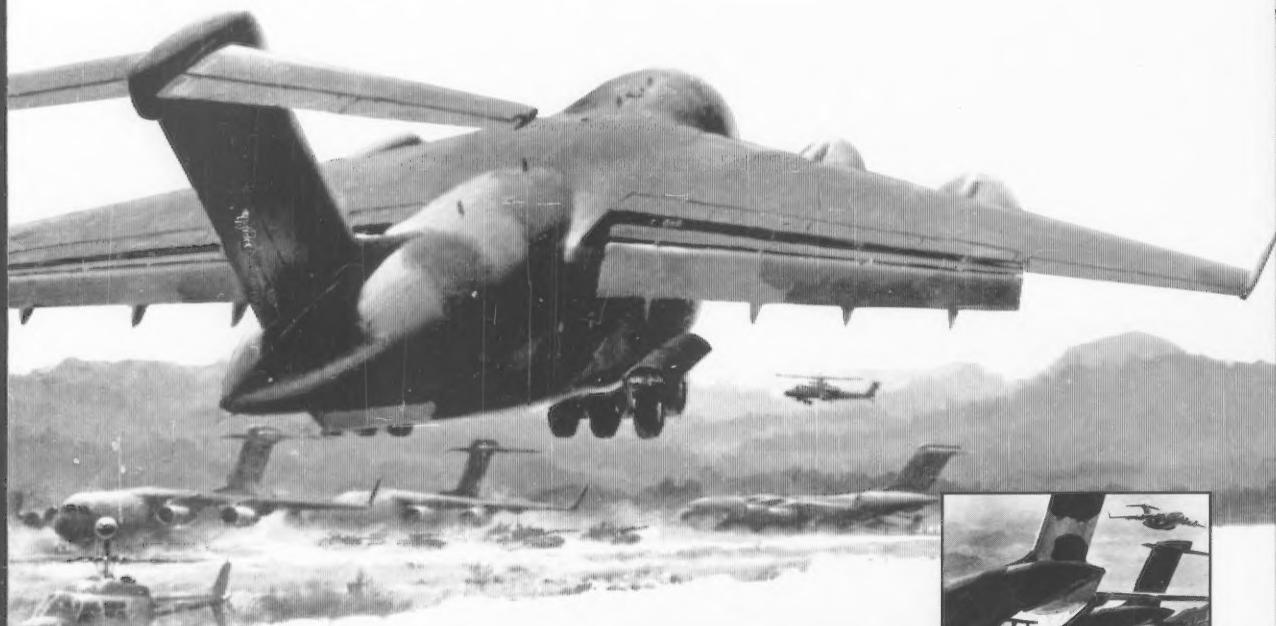
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The Lower case

Laxalt named mobster 'special assistant'

The Miami Herald 6/14/87



Paul Simon
... the singer



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... the candidate

What's in a name? Votes

The Cincinnati Enquirer 7/8/87

Columbus native to run home

The Republic (Columbus, Ind.) 7/17/87

Lee informed the auxiliary that a new doctor would be in Mena July 6, to begin his practice here in Eternal Medicine.

The Mena (Ark.) Star 6/21/87

Westinghouse Gives Robot Rights to Firm

The Washington Post 6/12/87

CLARIFICATION

■ The phrase "Dummy head," which was accidentally printed beneath a photograph in Thursday's Virginian-Pilot, was intended as a typographical notation for use in the production process. It was not intended to describe in any way the subject of the photograph.

The Virginian-Pilot 6/24/87

Barbie believed in U.S., witness testifies

Anchorage Daily News 6/5/87

Grilled duck shows off skill

The Evening Phoenix (Phoenixville, Pa.) 6/24/87

Cowboys to be shot in western Canada

The Globe and Mail

Cowboys Don't Cry, a \$2.9-million feature film written and directed by Anne Wheeler (Loyalties), is scheduled to begin shooting Aug. 10 in Alberta, a spokesman for Atlantis Films Ltd. says.

Toronto Globe and Mail 7/14/87

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Office of Communication, United Church of Christ, June 1987

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The Burlington (Vt.) Free Press 3/12/87

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